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THE MERCURY BOOK OF VERSE

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THE MERCURY BOOK OF VERSE

Being a Selection of Poems published in *The London Mercury*, 1919–1930

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

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INTRODUCTION

An anthology is too often a mere *Who's Who* in poetry—a catalogue of the well known, useful as an *aide-memoire* and a guarantee of quality. No doubt the better anthologies represent each an individual choice: but even so they are not always infallible guides—Palgrave stocked the work of Tennyson and O'Shaughnessy overlargely: Alice Meynell drew the line above Gray's *Elegy*. By such aberrations we are driven to inquire not only whose choice is this, but upon what principle and with what range of comparison has it been made? A preference is readily granted: but is it based on popularity or prejudice, convention or eccentricity? Is the personal view the result of a broad experience and a close insight? Is the eye of the anthologist polygonal, as that of an insect, and has he visited all, or nearly all, of the flowers in the garden, and understood the secret virtues of their nectar?

To ask such questions is to formulate a very exacting demand: but it is necessary to be exacting where the field of blossom is so rich. It may be that by this time it has become impossible to make any selection which should represent the shorter poems of England and yet be held in the hand. What we need then is perhaps a series of periodical anthologies—*Poetry in the Eighties*, *Poetry in the Nineties*, *Poetry of To-day*. The choice, as before, must be a wide one: it must be based on principle as well as on preference; and the standard of selection must be put frankly before the reader.

The present collection, as I see it, is an experiment on these lines: it is the anthology of a period. *The London Mercury* is now in its twelfth year: for 136 months it has published new verse, not in the occasional old journalistic fashion—to one poet one poem and perhaps one-twentieth of a page: but bountifully, as a good man gathers flowers to give to his friend—two of this

and three of that, and quite a handful altogether—the best of the day's showing, and those most likely to please a man with some knowledge of what is good. Readers who are familiar with the *London Mercury* and its contributors will by this time have measured accurately enough how far their own preferences correspond to those which have been at work here. If they have not yet arrived at this equation they have only to turn to the index of poets represented. This shows no fewer than 106 names, and though there are now, it is calculated, more than 1000 poets flowering among us in full volume, the *London Mercury's* list, though it might be enlarged, could not be surpassed. It may fairly claim to be the harvest of a successful as well as a liberal choice: and it does claim to have been made with complete indifference to prejudice, either personal or conventional. Evidently, upon the face of it, great poets have been duly honoured, old and retiring poets have been welcomed on their noiseless return to the world that has forgotten them, and many of the young and confident have found themselves none the less appreciated for all their youthfulness and confidence. Nine hundred remain, it is true, unrepresented: but there is this precedent to encourage them: that the most durable fame has often come to a poet late in life, when he has at last conquered a hostile or reluctant public.

In the meantime this survey, this collection, with whatever additions each of us may make for himself, gives us the means of noting the supply and demand of verse, the trend of feeling, the poetical form and pressure of life in our time. If we look only for a changeless and external measurement of beauty we imagine a vain thing: what we most deeply love is that which passes, and the manner of its passing. This book shows us some of the already vanishing contours of the England we have known.

HENRY NEWBOLT

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CLAUDE COLLEER ABBOTT

Stallion

Round by the black barn and the shrunken pond,
Now treading slow, now sidling proudly on,
Through warm air startled by his eager neigh
The Suffolk stallion cleaves his stately way.

His body gleaming firm as moulded bronze,
His feathered fetlocks plumed with silken gold,
His belted tail, thick mane, with ribands blent,
He strides to mate his mares, magnificent.

The deep expectant eyes shine mildly bright,
The rich flanks quiver, stiff the great neck curves,
Faster the mighty head throws toss and fling
When stabled mares whinny their welcoming.

With dull and sullen face, thin buskined legs,
Leading his charge in apathy and ease,
A dusty groom plods wearily beside
This majesty of limb, this fruitful pride.

J. R. ACKERLEY

Ghosts

I

Can they still live,
Beckon and cry
Over the years
After they die,
Bringing us tears
Meditative?

II

Those we once set
With us abreast,
Shielded and cherished,
Are they distressed
If we forget
After they've perished?

III

So while they sleep
Do they not trust
Friendship to keep
Memory bright
Lest it fall quite
Into the dust?

IV

Ah, but they try
That to retain
Lest they should die
Over again . . .

. . . .

V

What magic art
Conjured his name
Out of still seas,
So that my heart,
Stripped of its ease,
Filled me with shame?

VI

Out of what space
Echoed his laughter
Back to my ear?
Whence rose his face,
Friendly and clear,
All this time after?

VII

I had been reading,
Rapt, never heeding
How the light crept
Out of the room . . .
Almost I slept
Lulled by the gloom . . .

VIII

. . . Dreamily raising
Out of the embers
Castles and forts. . . .
Ah, it's amazing
How one remembers
Trivial thoughts!

IX

And . . . did I brood?
Nay, free from care,
Grief, or desire,

Such was my mood,
Sunk in a chair
Close to the fire.

X

Almost I slept . . .
Weariness swept
Idle pretences
Out of my heart;
Slowly my senses
Glided apart. . . .

XI

. . . Glided like ships
Over the seas;
Flitted like birds
Over the trees . . .
Then came his words
Back to my lips.

XII

Softly they stole,
Wave upon wave,
Crushing my soul
Into his grave. . . .
"You will forget. . . .
You will forget. . . ."

XIII

Then came his eyes
Shining with truth;
Then came his voice
Broken with sighs;
Friend of my choice!
Friend of my youth!

XIV

God! But I burned
Him to embrace,
Feeling his breath
Hot on my face,
So that I yearned
Almost to death.

XV

So that I reeled
Free from sleep's fetters
Out of my chair
Over to where
I had concealed
Certain old letters.

XVI

Holding a taper
Over my head,
Thrust I aside
Bundles of paper,
Labelled and tied,
Seeking my dead.

XVII

Hearing him yet
Saying "Good-bye!"
Hearing his sigh,
Murmured so low,
"Ah, but I know . . .
You will forget."

XVIII

Had I not chaffed,
Mocking his dole?
Had I not laughed

In my endeavour
Him to console,
Telling him, "Never"?

XIX

Almost distraught,
Kneeling I sought,
Rummaged and fumbled,
Straining my eyes. . . .
Then my hand stumbled
On to my prize.

XX

Buried like him,
Withering under
Many a story
Nearly as dim,
Drained of its wonder
Barren of glory.

XXI

So that I wept:
Strong as a tide
Bitterness swept
Over my head. . . .
I had not cried
When he was dead.

XXII

Dully I sobbed,
While my heart throbbed
Still with that low
Cry of regret;
"Ah, but I know. . . .
You will forget."

. . . .

XXIII

How came this shade,
Strangely begotten,
Back to my mind,
Bringing behind
Grief long allayed,
Almost forgotten?

XXIV

Ah, but they live,
Beckon and cry
Over the years
After they die,
Bringing us tears
Meditative.

CONRAD AIKEN

Battersea Bridge

"This is the hour," she said, "of transmutation:
It is the eucharist of the evening, changing
All things to beauty. Now the ancient river,
That all day under the arch was polished jade,
Becomes the ghost of a river, thinly gleaming
Under a silver cloud. It is not water:
It is that azure stream in which the stars
Bathe at the daybreak and become immortal."
"And the moon," said I, not thus to be outdone,
"What of the moon? . . . Over the dusty plane-trees
Which crouch in the dusk above their feeble lanterns,
Each coldly lighted by his tiny faith;
The moon, the waxen moon, now almost full,
Creeps whitely up. Westward the waves of cloud,
Vermilion, crimson, violet, stream on the air,
Shatter to golden flakes in the icy green
Infinity of twilight. . . . And the moon
Drinks up their light, and as they fade, or darken,
Brightens. . . . O monstrous miracle of the twilight
That one should live because the others die!"
"Strange too," she answered, "that upon this azure
Pale-gleaming ghostly stream, impalpable—
So faint, so fine, that scarcely it bears up
The petals that the lantern strews upon it—
These great black barges float like apparitions,
Loom in the silver of it, beat upon it,
Moving upon it as dragons move in air."
"Thus always," then I answered, looking never
Toward her face, so beautiful and strange

It grew, with feeding on the evening light,
"The gross is given by inscrutable God
Power to beat wide wings upon the subtle.
Thus we ourselves, so fleshly, fallible, mortal,
Stand here, for all our foolishness, transfigured:
Hung over nothing in an arch of light,
While one more evening, like a wave of silence,
Gathers the stars together and goes out."

E. N. DA C. ANDRADE

Song

Nothing I have is worth a tear:
Books and papers, gauds and gear.
Happier beetle spread on his back
Than I boxed up with this what-d'ye-lack.
What makes man as he stands?
Head, belly and hands:
Three to serve one, and the world goes on.

Once I'd a heart, but they did not approve it,
Slit up my side, and let remove it,
Since I've been good they have given to me
Paper galore, and much good may it do me.
What brings man relief?
Bread, pudding and beef.
Three kinds of food: paper's no good.

Soldiers tell me fighting's no frolic,
Wise men tell me love is a colic,
Bishops tell me learning's a lie—
Somebody tells me that I must die.
What shall serve man then?
Sword, sonnet or pen?
All things must fall: God help us all!

Happiness

Is happiness a solid thing
Like gold, like ceremonial gear,

That still you say "I will possess it"?
A kind of fruit, a clustering
Of grapes that yields a liquid cheer
Enstorable, if you shall press it?
Will you, against a waning year,
Bin it, or bind it, is it ear
Of wheat, or honey golden clear,
The flower's amber-hearted tear,
Caught by a waxen web in summertide,
That you will drain, drain, drain, and sip or set aside?

Step light,
Speak soft,
'Tis a thing a word can frighten,
Takes flight,
Lifts aloft
Ere your greedy grasp can tighten.
'Tis a bird that wings his way
Ever in the sun's full ray,
Endazzlement's dear centre, guessed
Rather than seen by light-distressed
And blinking eye, that will not be controlled.
Or rather 'tis a wind no net can hold.

Reflect, be wise,
And seek some lesser prize
Rather than airy stuff that cheats the sympathies.
Be sober, be content
To know the evident
Rather than gape at gleam, and bright astonishment.
This is a fever, caught
By minds unwrapped of thought,
That passes with a draught of sour experience bought.
I counsel you to set your spirit bounds
Lest, head in air, you sink unseen in quaking grounds.

"Oh, you speak sooth, and argue well enough
After the way of men whose minds are tough.
But I know one, well learnèd in these things,
For whom this bird is tame, for whom he sings
Willing with wavering breast, and quiet folded wings:
Or, if a wind, a wind her spell that knows
And still about her house each blissful evening blows."

MARTIN ARMSTRONG

Before Battle

Here on the blind verge of infinity
We live and move like moles. Our crumbling trench
Gapes like a long wound in the sodden clay.
The land is dead. No voice, no living thing,
No happy green of leaf tells that the spring
Wakes in the world behind us. Empty gloom
Fills the cold interspace of earth and sky.
The sky is waterlogged and the drenched earth
Rots, and the whining sorrow of slow shells
Flies overhead. But memory, like the rose,
Wakes and puts forth her bright and odorous blooms
And builds green hanging gardens in the heart.

Once, in another life, in other places,
Where a slow river coiled through broad green spaces
And sunlight filled the long grass of the meadows
And moving water flashed from shine to shadows
Of old green-feathered willows, bent in ranks
Along sun-speckled banks,
Lovely remembered things now gone for ever;
I saw young men run naked by the river,
Thirty young soldiers. Where the field-path goes,
Their boots and shirts and khaki lay in rows.

With feet among the long warm grass stood one
Like ivory in the sun,
And in the water, white upon the shade
That hung beneath the shore,

His long reflection like a slow flag swayed
And at a trembling of the water frayed
Into a hundred shreds, then joined once more.
One, where the river (when the willows end)
Breaks from its calm to swirl about a bend—
Strong swimmer he—wrestled against the race
Of the full stream. I saw his laughing face
Framed by his upcurved arm. Another, slim,
Hands above head, stood braced upon the brim,
Then dived—a brother of the curved new moon—
And came up streaming soon
Ten feet beyond, brown shoulders shining wet
And comic face and hair washed sleek as jet.
Farther upstream I saw a gay young fellow
Climb stealthily into a leaning willow,
And perch there, hidden, crooning like a dove,
Till from the pool below a voice was heard:
"'Ere, Bert! Where's Bert?" And Bert sang out above:
"Up here, old son, changed to a bloody bird!"
And dived through leaves and shattered through the cool
Clear watery mirror, and all across the pool
Slow winking circles opened out, till he
Rose and in rising broke their symmetry.

Their shouts and laughter filled the sparkling air:
White flakes of shining water everywhere
Splashed from their diving. Hosts of little billows
Beat on the shores, and the boughs of the hanging willows
Glittered with glassy drops. Then, bright as fire,
A bugle sounded, and their happy din
Stopped, and the boys, with that swift discipline
With which keen life answers the heart's desire,
Rushed for the bank. And all the bank grew white
With bodies swarming up out of the stream.
From the water and the trees they came to sight:
Across dark leaves I saw their quick limbs gleam.

Then brandished towels flashed whitely everywhere:
They dried their ears and scrubbed their towzled hair:
One, stepping to the water, carefully
Stretched a bare leg to rinse a muddy foot:
One sat with updrawn knee,
Bent head, and both hands tugging on a boot.
And gradually the bright and flashing crowd
Dimmed into sober khaki. Then their loud
Laughter and shouts and songs died at a word:
The ranks fell in. No sound, no movement stirred.
The willow boughs were still, the blue sky burned.
The party numbered down, formed fours, right-turned,
Marched. And their shadows faded from the stream
And the dark pool swayed back into its dream:
Only the trampled meadow-grass reported
Where all that gay humanity had sported.

The dream has dimmed. I wake, remembering how
Many of those smart boys no longer now
Cast running shadows on the grass or make
White tents with laughter shake,
But lie in narrow chambers underground,
Eyes void of sunlight, ears unthrilled by sound
Of laughter. Round this post on every hand
Stretches a dim, charred sepulchre of land
Where ruined homes and shell-torn fields are lost
In one great sea of clay—clay seared by fire,
Battered by rainstorms, jagged and scarred, and crossed
By gaping trench-lines hedged with rusted wire.

The rainy evening fades. A rainy night
Sags down upon us. Wastes of sodden clay
Fade like a mist, and fade all sound and sight,
All broken sounds and movements of the day,
To emptiness, to listlessness, a grey

Unhappy silence tremulous with the poise
Of hearts intent and fearful expectation
And secret preparation,
Silence that is not peace, but bated breath,
A listening for death,
A breathless prelude to tremendous noise

O give us one more day of sun and leaves,
The laughing soldiers and the laughing stream,
And when at dawn the loud destruction cleaves
This silence, and, like men that move in dream,
(Knowing the awaited trial has begun)
We climb the trench, and cross the wire, and start,
We'll stumble through the shell-bursts with good heart
Like boys who race through meadows in the sun.

Honey Harvest

Late in March, when the days are growing longer
And sight of early green
Tells of the coming spring and suns grown stronger,
Round the pale willow-catkins there are seen
The year's first honey-bees
Stealing the nectar: and bee-masters know
This for the first sign of the honey-flow.

Then in the dark hillsides the Cherry-trees
Gleam white with loads of blossom where the gleams
Of piled snow lately hung, and richer streams
The honey. Now, if chilly April days
Delay the Apple-blossom and the May's
First week come in with sudden summer weather,
The Apple and the Hawthorn bloom together,
And all day long the plundering hordes go round
And every overweighted blossom nods.

But from that gathered essence they compound
Honey more sweet than nectar of the gods.

Those blossoms fall ere June, warm June that brings
The small white Clover. Field by scented field,
Round farms like islands in the rolling weald,
It spreads thick-flowering or in wildness springs
Short-stemmed upon the naked downs, to yield
A richer store of honey than the Rose,
The Pink, the Honeysuckle. Thence there flows
Nectar of clearest amber, redolent
  Of every flowery scent
That the warm wind upgathers as he goes.

In mid-July be ready for the noise
Of million bees in old Lime-avenues,
As though hot noon had found a droning voice
To ease her soul. Here for those busy crews
Green leaves and pale-stemmed clusters of green flowers
Build heavy-perfumed, cool, green-twilight bowers
Whence, load by load, through the long summer days
  They fill their glassy cells
With dark green honey, clear as chrysoprase,
Which housewives shun; but the bee-master tells
This brand is more delicious than all else.

In August-time, if moors are near at hand,
Be wise and in the evening-twilight load
Your hives upon a cart, and take the road
By night: that, ere the early dawn shall spring
And all the hills turn rosy with the Ling,
  Each waking hive may stand
Established in its new-appointed land
Without harm taken, and the earliest flights
Set out at once to loot the heathery heights.

That vintage of the Heather yields so dense
And glutinous a syrup that it foils
Him who would spare the comb and drain from thence
  Its dark, full-flavoured spoils:
For he must squeeze to wreck the beautiful
Frail edifice. Not otherwise he sacks
Those many-chambered palaces of wax.

Then let a choice of every kind be made
And, labelled, set upon your storehouse racks—
Of Hawthorn-honey that of almond smacks:
The luscious Lime-tree-honey green as jade:
Pale Willow-honey, hived by the first rover:
  That delicate honey culled
From Apple-blossom, that of sunlight tastes:
And sunlight-coloured honey of the Clover.
  Then, when the late year wastes,
When night falls early and the noon is dulled
  And the last warm days are over,
Unlock the store and to your table bring
Essence of every blossom of the spring.
And if, when wind has never ceased to blow
All night, you wake to roofs and trees becalmed
  In level wastes of snow,
Bring out the Lime-tree-honey, the embalmed
Soul of a lost July, or Heather-spiced
Brown-gleaming comb wherein sleeps crystallised
All the hot perfume of the heathery slope.
And, tasting and remembering, live in hope.

In Lamplight

Now that the chill October day is declining,
Pull the blinds, draw each voluminous curtain
Till the room is full of gloom and of the uncertain
Gleams of firelight on polished edges shining.

Then bring the rosy lamp to its wonted station
On the dark-gleaming table. In that soft splendour
Well-known things of the room, grown deep and tender,
Gather around, a mysterious congregation:—
Pallid sheen of silver, the bright brass fender,
The wine-red pool of carpet, the bowl of roses
Lustrous-hearted, crimsons and purples looming
From dusky rugs and curtains. Nothing discloses
The unseen walls but the broken, richly-glooming
Gold of frames and opulent wells of mingling
Dim colours gathered in darkened mirrors. And breaking
The dreamlike spell and out of your deep chair moving
You go, perhaps, to the shelves and, slowly singling
Some old rich-blazoned book, return. But the gleaming
Spells close round you again and you fall to dreaming,
Eyes grown dim, the book on your lap unheeded.

Miss Thompson Goes Shopping

(For J. I. A.)

Miss Thompson at Home

In her lone cottage on the downs,
With winds and blizzards and great crowns
Of shining cloud, with wheeling plover
And short grass sweet with the small white clover,
Miss Thompson lived, correct and meek,
A lonely spinster, and every week
On market-day she used to go
Into the little town below,
Tucked in the great downs' hollow bowl,
Like pebbles gathered in a shoal.

She Goes a-Marketing

So, having washed her plates and cup
And banked the kitchen fire up,
Miss Thompson slipped upstairs and dressed,
Put on her black (her second best),

The bonnet trimmed with rusty plush,
Peeped in the glass with simpering blush,
From camphor-smelling cupboard took
Her thicker jacket off the hook
Because the day might turn to cold.
Then, ready, slipped downstairs and rolled
The hearthrug back; then searched about,
Found her basket, ventured out,
Snecked the door and paused to lock it
And plunge the key in some deep pocket.
Then, as she tripped demurely down
The steep descent, the little town
Spread wider till its sprawling street
Enclosed her and her footfalls beat
On hard stone pavement; and she felt
Those throbbing ecstasies that melt
Through heart and mind as, happy, free,
Her small, prim personality
Merged into the seething strife
Of auction-marts and city life.

She Visits the Bootmaker

Serenely down the busy stream
Miss Thompson floated in a dream.
Now, hovering bee-like, she would stop
Entranced before some tempting shop,
Getting in people's way and prying
At things she never thought of buying;
Now wafted on without an aim.
And thus in course of time she came
To Watson's bootshop. Long she pries
At boots and shoes of every size,
Brown football-boots, with bar and stud,
For boys that scuffle in the mud,
And dancing-pumps with pointed toes
Glassy as jet, and dull black bows;

Slim ladies' shoes with two-inch heel,
And sprinkled beads of gold and steel.
"How anyone can wear such things!"
On either side the doorway springs
(As in a tropic jungle loom
Masses of strange thick-petalled bloom
And fruits misshapen) fold on fold
A growth of sandshoes rubber-soled,
Clambering the doorposts, branching, spawning
Their barbarous bunches like an awning
Over the windows and the doors.

Is Tempted

But, framed among the other stores,
Something has caught Miss Thompson's eye
(O worldliness, O vanity!),
A pair of slippers—scarlet plush.
Miss Thompson feels a conscious blush
Suffuse her face, as though her thought
Had ventured further than it ought.
But O that colour's rapturous singing
And the answer in her lone heart ringing!
She turns (O, Guardian Angels, stop her
From doing anything improper!).
She turns; and, see, she stoops and bungles
In through the sandshoes' hanging jungles,
Away from light and common-sense,
Into the shop dim-lit, and dense
With smells of polish and tanned hide.
Soon from a dark recess inside
Fat Mrs. Watson comes, slip slop,
To mind the business of the shop.
She walks flat-footed with a roll—
A serviceable, homely soul,
With kindly, ugly face like dough,
Hair dull and colourless as tow.

A huge Scotch pebble fills the space
Between her bosom and her face.
One sees her making beds all day.
Miss Thompson lets her say her say
—"So chilly for the time of year.
It's ages since we saw you here"—
Then, heart a-flutter, speech precise,
Describes the shoes and asks the price.
"Them, miss? Ah, them is six-and-nine!"

Wrestles with the Temptation

Miss Thompson shudders down the spine
(Dream of impossible romance).
She eyes them with a wistful glance,
Torn between good and evil. Yes,
For half a minute, and no less,
Miss Thompson strives with seven devils,
Then, soaring over earthly levels,
Turns from the shoes with lingering touch—

And is Saved

"Ah, six-and-nine is far too much!
Sorry to trouble you. Good day!"

She Visits the Fishmonger

A little farther down the way
Stands Miles's fish-shop, whence is shed
So strong a smell of fishes dead
That people of a subtler sense
Hold their breath and hurry thence.
Miss Thompson hovers there and gazes.
Her housewife's knowing eye appraises
Salt and fresh, severely cons
Kippers bright as tarnished bronze;
Great cods disposed upon the sill,
Chilly and wet, with gaping gill,

Flat head, glazed eye, and mute, uncouth,
Shapeless, wan, old-woman's mouth.
Next, a row of soles and plaice,
With querulous and twisted face,
And red-eyed bloaters, golden-grey;
Smoked haddocks ranked in neat array;
A group of smelts that take the light
Like slips of rainbow, pearly bright;
Silver trout with rosy spots,
And coral shrimps with keen black dots
For eyes, and hard and jointed sheath
And crisp tails curving underneath.
But there upon the sanded floor,
More wonderful in all that store
Than anything on slab or shelf,
Stood Miles the fishmonger himself.
Foursquare he stood and filled the place.
His huge hands and his jolly face
Were red. He had a mouth to quaff
Pint after pint: a sounding laugh,
But wheezy at the end, and oft
His eyes bulged outwards and he coughed.
Aproned he stood from chin to toe.
The apron's vertical long flow
Warped grandly outwards to display
His hale, round belly hung midway,
Whose apex was securely bound
With apron-strings wrapped round and round.
Outside Miss Thompson, small and staid,
Felt, as she always felt, afraid
Of this huge man who laughed so loud
And drew the notice of the crowd.
Awhile she paused in timid thought,
Then promptly hurried in and bought
"Two kippers, please. Yes, lovely weather."
"Two kippers? Sixpence altogether."

And in her basket laid the pair
Wrapped face to face in newspaper.

Relapses into Temptation

Then on she went, as one half-blind,
For things were stirring in her mind.
Then turned about with fixed intent,
And, heading for the bootshop, went

And Falls

Straight in and bought the scarlet slippers,
And popped them in beside the kippers.

She Visits the Chemist

So much for that. From there she tacked,
Still flushed by this decisive act,
Westward, and came without a stop
To Mr. Wren the chemist's shop,
And paused outside awhile to see
The tall, big-bellied bottles, three—
Red, blue, and emerald, richly bright,
Each with its burning core of light.
The bell chimed as she pushed the door,
Spotless the oilcloth on the floor,
Limpid as water each glass case,
Each thing precisely in its place.
Rows of small drawers, black-lettered each
With curious words of foreign speech,
Ranked high above the other ware.
The old strange fragrance filled the air,
A fragrance like the garden pink,
But tinged with vague medicinal stink
Of camphor, soap, new sponges, blent
With chloroform and violet scent.
And Wren the chemist, tall and spare,
Stood gaunt behind his counter there.

Quiet and very wise he seemed,
With skull-like face, bald head that gleamed;
Through spectacles his eyes looked kind;
He wore a pencil tucked behind
His ear. And never he mistakes
The wildest signs the doctor makes
Prescribing drugs. Brown paper, string
He will not use for anything,
But all in neat white parcels packs
And sticks them up with sealing-wax.
Miss Thompson bowed and blushed, and then
Undoubting bought of Mr. Wren,
Being free from modern scepticism,
A bottle for her rheumatism,
Also some peppermints to take
In case of wind; an oval cake
Of scented soap; a penny square
Of pungent naphthalene to scare
The moth. And after Wren had wrapped
And sealed the lot, Miss Thompson clapped
Them in beside the fish and shoes.
"Good day," she says, and off she goes.

Is Led Away by the Pleasure of the Town

Bee-like Miss Thompson, whither next?
Outside you pause awhile, perplext,
Your bearings lost. Then all comes back
And round she wheels, hot on the track
Of Giles the grocer; and from there
To Emilie the milliner,
There to be tempted by the sight
Of hats and blouses fiercely bright.
(O guard Miss Thompson, Powers that Be,
From Crudeness and Vulgarity!)

Still on from shop to shop she goes
With sharp bird's-eye, inquiring nose,

Prying and peering, entering some,
Oblivious of the thought of home.

Is Convinced of Indiscretion

The town brimmed up with deep-blue haze,
But still she stayed to flit and gaze,
Her eyes a-blur with rapturous sights,
Her small soul full of small delights,
Empty her purse, her basket filled.
The traffic in the town was stilled.
The clock struck six. Men thronged the inns.
Dear, dear, she should be home long since.

And Returns Home

Then, as she climbed the misty downs,
The lamps were lighted in the town's
Small streets. She saw them, star by star,
Multiplying from afar;
Till, mapped beneath her, she could trace
Each street and the wide, square market-place
Sunk deep and deeper as she went
Higher up the steep ascent.
And all that soul-uplifting stir
Step by step fell back from her,
The glory gone, the blossoming
Shrivelled, and she, a small, frail thing,
Carrying her laden basket, till
Darkness and silence of the hill
Received her in their restful care
And stars came dropping through the air.

But loudly, sweetly sang the slippers
In the basket with the kippers.
And loud and sweet the answering thrills
From her lone heart on the hills.

The Buzzards

When evening came and the warm glow grew deeper,
And every tree that bordered the green meadows
And in the yellow cornfields every reaper
And every corn-shock stood above their shadows
Flung eastward from their feet in longer measure,
Serenely far there swam in the sunny height
A buzzard and his mate who took their pleasure
Swirling and poising idly in golden light.

On great pied motionless moth-wings borne along,
So effortless and so strong,
Cutting each other's paths together they glided,
Then wheeled asunder till they soared divided
Two valleys' width (as though it were delight
To part like this, being sure they could unite
So swiftly in their empty, free dominion),
Curved headlong downward, towered up the sunny steep,
Then, with a sudden lift of the one great pinion,
Swung proudly to a curve, and from its height
Took half a mile of sunlight in one long sweep.

And we, so small on the swift immense hillside,
Stood tranced, until our souls arose uplifted
On those far-sweeping, wide,
Strong curves of flight—swayed up and hugely drifted,
Were washed, made strong and beautiful in the tide
Of sun-bathed air. But far beneath, beholden
Through shining deeps of air, the fields were golden
And rosy burned the heather where cornfields ended.

And still those buzzards wheeled, while light withdrew
Out of the vales and to surging slopes ascended,
Till the loftiest-flaming summit died to blue.

KENNETH ASHLEY

The Owl at "The Swan"

You who loved twilight and the dusky night
Must perch transfixed, undazzled, in this room
Of smoke and fume and talk and garish light:
A rigid mummy in a glassy tomb,
Tawdry with paint and artificial grass,
With sand and moss, and boughs of cork and glue,
Until some spring a careless servant lass
Shatter your case and make an end of you;
Or moth within your case finding its way
Shall breed new life to work your last decay.

You knew this countryside; your still wings were
Part of its glamour forty years ago,
As in the twilight you came sweeping there
Round stack, and ivied barn, and old hedgerow—
From Stubbins Wood you'd beat to Assarts Farm
And then by Flixter Beck to Nickerbush—
Until one eve the cool sweet curfew calm
Was broken by a gun, and with a tumbling rush
To earth you came; wings whirling o'er and o'er,
And life's mysterious light informed your eyes no more.

Your race is reckoned wise and mine more so;
But ne'er a seer of us can cast a spell,
To shield our memories safe from overthrow,
That's one whit better than your fragile shell.
And gallant bipeds, many and many a one,
Who made much stir and flutter in their day,
From their familiar hunting fields have gone,
And not one relic of their flight does stay:

Old gunning Time has ta'en them altogether,
Nor left of their brave plumage one poor feather.

Goods Train at Night

The station is empty and desolate;
A sick lamp wanly glows;
Slowly puffs a goods engine,
Slow yet alive with great energy;
Drawing rumbling truck
After rumbling, rumbling truck;
Big, half-seen, insensate.
Yet each as it jolts through the glow
Responds to the questioning light
Dumbly revealing
Diverse personality:
"Neal & Co."; "John Bugsworth"; "Norland Collieries
Limited";
"Jolly & Sons"; "Jolly & Sons"; "Jolly & Sons";
Thrice repeated, percussive, insistent—
Each wet wall-side successively announcing
Names: badges and symbols of men,
Of men in their intricate trafficking—
But there quickens a deeper emotion,
Roused by the iterant names,
Beyond the mere intricate commerce,
The infinite wonder of life.
Effort and hope and love, the heart's desire,
Leap in the womb of the brain
As the trucks clang their way through the night.
Slides by the guard's van at the last,
With a last definite clatter of steel upon steel
And a glitter of ruby-red light.

So: silence recaptures the station;
The damp steam eddies out;

The drizzle weaves a silver pattern,
An endless shining silver pattern,
A silver woof in the lamplight.
And I find myself full of a grief—
A dull little grief for humanity.

Cow and Seed Stack

Thick cud riseth:
Slowly to chew—
Slowly to swallow—
Cud riseth anew.
To swing the tail—
Fly hummeth by—
Sun striketh hot:
To cover the eye.
Wind bringth a smell;
Smells well within—
To widen the nose;
Cud riseth thin.
Rare is that smell,
Rarely it puts
Craving in belly,
Pulleth at guts.
To get me up:
To have in mind
Smelleth as that
Food that eats kind.
Slowly to rise:
To arch the back;
To husk the throat;
Dry joints to crack;
So: surely to go,
Surely to find,
Food that eats well,
Up field, up wind.

OWEN BARFIELD

On Reading an Elizabethan Lyric in the British Museum Reading Room

This is the fifty millionth year—
The world is old—how old it seems!
Young literary gents flock here
To feed on piles of dead men's dreams:

Bulging with dead men's thoughts, the air
Hangs underneath the dome how still!
And girls with long and lovely hair
Around them read John Stuart Mill.

God, for a doublet and a swishing cloak,
A pretty bodkin, and a lightning stroke,
A green bank, and some ladies not too wise
To listen while I raved about their eyes!

Sonnet

Because the misery of some great men
Made music in the ears of all the world,
And sorrow broke in waves from Shakespeare's pen,
As sonnet after sonnet rose, and curled,
And broke upon the couplet—have I thought
That I, because I suffered much, could sing?
Yes, I arose a little while and fought
With jagged words, hoping that Pain would wring,
Using my body and soul as instrument,
Beauty from Life to fashion young men's dreams

And sweeten old men's memories—I meant,
Being a wasted torch, to throw my beams
Over the world: laugh not: I tried to make
The Spirit of Man more lovely for your sake.

THE HON. MAURICE BARING

Epitaph

Here, murdered by the frenzied, not the free,
Lies the last monarch of a star-crossed line;
Anointed Emperor by right divine:
From Arctic icefields to the Aral sea,
From Warsaw to the walls of Tartary.
His country's travail claimed a high design;
Too stubborn to respond, he shrank supine
Before the large demand of destiny.

Bereft of crown, and throne, and heart, and name,
Grief lent him majesty, and suffering
Gave him a more than royal diadem.
His people kissed the desecrated hem
Of robes not now of splendour but of shame,
And waited for the rising of the King.

HILAIRE BELLOC

EPIGRAMS

I

On His Books

When I am dead, I hope it may be said:
"His sins were scarlet, but his books were read."

II

On Lady Poltagrue, a Public Peril

The Devil, having nothing else to do,
Went off to tempt My Lady Poltagrue.
My Lady, tempted by a private whim,
To his extreme annoyance, tempted him.

III

The Mirror

The mirror held your fair, my Fair,
A fickle moment's space.
You looked into my eyes, and there
For ever fixed your face.

Keep rather to your looking-glass
Than my more constant eyes:
It told the truth—Alas! my lass,
My faithful memory lies.

IV

The Telephone

To-night in million-voicèd London I
Was lonely as the million-pointed sky
Until your single voice. Ah! So the Sun
Peoples all heaven, although he be but one!

V

The Statue

When we are dead, some Hunting-boy will pass
And find a stone half hidden in tall grass
And grey with age: but having seen that stone
(Which was your image) ride more slowly on.

VI

On Mundane Acquaintances

Good morning, Algernon: Good morning, Percy.
Good morning, Mrs. Roebeck. Christ have mercy!

VII

On a Rose for Her Bosom

Go, lovely rose, and tell the lovelier fair
That he which loved her most was never there.

VIII

On the Little God

Of all the gods that gave me all their glories
To-day there deigns to walk with me but one.
I lead him by the hand and tell him stories.
It is the Queen of Cyprus' little son.

IX

On a Dead Hostess

Of this bad world the loveliest and the best
Has smiled and said "Good night," and gone to rest.

X

On the Great Election

The accursed power which stands on Privilege
(And goes with Women and Champagne and Bridge)
Broke—and Democracy resumed her reign:
(Which goes with Bridge and Women and Champagne).

XI

On a Sleeping Friend

Lady, when your lovely head
Droops to sink among the Dead,
And the quiet places keep
You that so divinely sleep;
Then the dead shall blessèd be
With a new solemnity,
For such Beauty, so descending,
Pledges them that Death is ending.
Sleep your fill—but when you wake
Dawn shall over Lethe break.

XII

For a Sundial

In soft deluding lies let fools delight.
A Shadow marks our days; which end in Night.

XIII

For the Same

Save on the rare occasions when the Sun
Is shining, I am only here for fun.

XIV

For the Same

Here in a glade, where few may know me, I
Mark the tremendous process of the sky.
So does your inmost soul, forgotten, mark
The Dawn, the Noon, the coming of the Dark.

XV

On Juliet

How did the Party go in Portland Square?
I cannot tell you; Juliet was not there.
And how did Lady Gaster's Party go?
Juliet was next me, and I do not know.

XVI

On the Same

Here Juliet lived. And who was Juliet pray?
I met her once upon a summer's day.

XVII

To the Same

Towards the evening of your splendid day
Those who are little children now, shall say
(Finding this verse), "Who wrote it, Juliet?"
And you will answer gently: "I forget."

XVIII

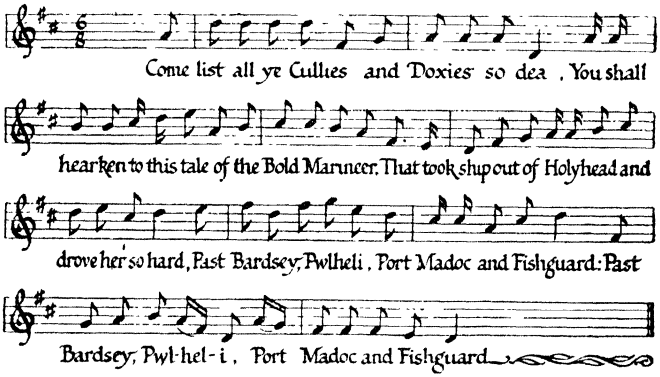
On Vital Statistics

"*Ill* fares the land, to hastening *ills* a prey,[1]
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."
But how much more unfortunate are those
Where wealth declines and population grows.

[1] *This line is execrable; and I note it.*
I quote it as the faulty Poet wrote it

The Chaunty of the "Nona"

[On her famous cruise from Holyhead to Bideford River in the year 1914, the month of June in that year.]


Come list all ye Cullies and Doxies so dea . You shall
hearken to this tale of the Bold Marineer. That took ship out of Holyhead and
drove her so hard, Past Bardsey, Pwlheli, Port Madoc and Fishguard: Past
Bardsey, Pwl-hel-i, Port Madoc and Fishguard

I

Come list all ye Cullies and Doxies so dear,
You shall hearken to this tale of the Bold Marineer
That took ship out of Holyhead and drove her so hard
Past Bardsey, Pwlheli, Port Madoc, and Fishguard—
Past Bardsey, Pwlheli, Port Madoc, and Fishguard.

II

Then he dropped out of Fishguard on a calm Summer's day,
Past St. David's and Strumbles and across St. Bride's Bay;
Circumnavigating Skomer, that Island around,
With the heart of a Lion he threaded Jack Sound—
With the heart of a Lion he threaded Jack Sound.

III

But from out the Main Ocean there rolled a great cloud,
So he clawed into Milford Haven by the Fog Blast so loud,
Until he dropped anchor in a deep-wooded bay,
Where all night with Old Sleep and Quiet Sadness he lay—
Where all night with Old Sleep and Quiet Sadness he lay.

IV

Next morning was a Doldrum, and he whistled for a breeze,
Which came from the N.N.W.'ard all across the high seas;
And in passing St. Govan's lightship he gave them good night,
But before it was morning he raised Lundy Light—
Before it was morning he had raised Lundy Light.

V

Then he tossed for twelve hours in that horrible place
Which is known to the Mariner as the Great White Horse Race,
Till with a slant about three bells, or maybe nearer four,
He saw white water breaking upon Loud Appledore—
He saw white water breaking upon Loud Appledore.

VI

The Pirates of Appledore, the Wines of Instow;
But her nose is for Bideford with the tide at the flow.
Rattle anchor, batten hatches, and leave your falls curled.
The Long Bridge of Bideford is the end of the World—
The Long Bridge of Bideford is the end of the World.

Tarantella

Do you remember an Inn,
Miranda?
Do you remember an Inn?
And the tedding and the spreading
Of the straw for a bedding,
And the fleas that tease in the High Pyrenees,
And the wine that tasted of the tar?
And the cheers and the jeers of the young muleteers
(Under the dark of the vine verandah)?
Do you remember an Inn, Miranda,
Do you remember an Inn?
And the cheers and the jeers of the young muleteers
Who hadn't got a penny,
And who weren't paying any,
And the hammer at the doors and the Din?
And the Hip! Hop! Hap!
Of the clap
Of the hands to the twirl and the swirl
Of the girl gone chancing,
Glancing,
Dancing,
Backing and advancing,
Snapping of the clapper to the spin
Out and in——
And the Ting, Tong, Tang of the Guitar!
Do you remember an Inn,
Miranda?
Do you remember an Inn?

Never more;
Miranda,
Never more.
Only the high peaks hoar:
And Aragon a torrent at the door.

No sound
In the walls of the Halls where falls
The tread
Of the feet of the dead to the ground.
No sound:
Only the boom
Of the far Waterfall like Doom.

LAURENCE BINYON

The House That Was

Of the old house, only a few crumbled
  Courses of brick, smothered in nettle and dock,
Or a squared stone, lying mossy where it tumbled!
  Sprawling bramble and saucy thistle mock
What once was firelit floor and private charm
  Where, seen in a windowed picture, hills were fading
At dusk, and all was memory-coloured and warm,
  And voices talked, secure from the wind's invading.

Of the old garden, only a stray shining
  Of daffodil flames amid April's cuckoo-flowers,
Or a cluster of aconite mixt with weeds entwining!
  But, dark and lofty, a royal cedar towers
By homely thorns: whether the white rain drifts
  Or sun scorches, he holds the downs in ken,
The western vale; his branchy tiers he lifts,
  Older than many a generation of men.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

The Scythe Struck by Lightning

A thick hot haze had choked the valley grounds
Long since, the dogday sun had gone his rounds
Like a dull coal half lit with sulky heat;
And leas were iron, ponds were clay, fierce beat
The blackening flies round moody cattle's eyes.
Wasps on the mudbanks seemed a hornet's size
That on the dead roach battened. The plough's increase
Stood under a curse.

Behold, the far release!
Old wisdom breathless at her cottage door
"Sounds of abundance" mused, and heard the roar
Of marshalled armies in the silent air,
And thought Elisha stood beside her there,
And clacking reckoned ere the next nightfall
She'd turn the looking-glasses to the wall.

Faster than armies out of the burnt void
The hour-glass clouds innumerably deployed,
And when the hay-folks next look up, the sky
Sags black above them; scarce is time to fly.
And most run for their cottages; but Ward,
The mower for the inn beside the ford,
And slow strides he with shouldered scythe still bare,
While to the coverts leaps the great-eyed hare.
As he came in the dust snatched up and whirled
Hung high, and like a bell-rope whipped and twirled;
The brazen light glared round, the haze resolved
Into demoniac shapes bulged and convolved.

Well might poor ewes afar make bleatings wild,
Though this old trusting mower sat and smiled,
For from the hush of many days the land
Had waked itself: and now on every hand
Shrill swift alarm-notes, cries and counter-cries,
Lowings and crowings came, and throbbing sighs.
Now atom lightning brandished on the moor,
Then out of sullen drumming came the roar
Of thunder joining battle east and west:
In hedge and orchard small birds durst not rest,
Flittering like dead leaves and like wisps of straws,
And the cuckoo called again, for without pause
Oncoming voices in the vortex burred.
The storm came toppling like a wave, and blurred
In grey the trees that like black steeples towered.
The sun's last yellow died. Then who but cowered?
Down ruddying darkness floods the hideous flash,
And pole to pole the cataract whirlwinds clash.

Alone within the tavern parlour still
Sat the gray mower, pondering his God's will,
And flinching not to flame or bolt, that swooped
With a great hissing rain till terror drooped
In weariness: and then there came a roar
Ten-thousand-fold, he saw not, was no more—
But life bursts on him once again, and blood
Beats droning round, and light comes in a flood.

He stares, and sees the sashes battered awry,
The wainscot shivered, the crocks shattered, and by,
His twisted scythe, melted by its fierce foe,
Whose Parthian shot struck down the chimney. Slow
Old Ward lays hand to his old working-friend,
And thanking God Whose mercy did defend
His servant, yet must drop a tear or two
And think of times when that old scythe was new,

And stands in silent grief, nor hears the voices
Of many a bird that through the land rejoices,
Nor sees through the smashed panes the sea-green sky,
That ripens into blue, nor knows the storm is by.

The Late Stand-To

I thought of cottages nigh brooks
  Whose aspens loved to shine and swirl,
And chubby babies' wondering looks
  Above the doorboards, and the girl
Who blossomed like the morning sky,
  With clear light like a lily made;
She dipt her bucket and went by
  Where bright the unwithering water played.

No water ever ran so blithe
  As that same mill-tail stream, I'd say,
And life as laughing danced as lithe
  And twinkled on as many a day.
The wonder seemed that summer waned,
  So full it filled the giant sphere,
But skulls chill on where warm blood reigned
  And even such summers must grow sere.

I heard the bell brag on the west
  And whisper on the eastern wind,
And hated how it found the nest
  That Time was never meant to find:
Through many an afternoon blue-hung
  Like sultry smoke with drowsy heat
There came the bell-cote's scheming tongue
  Till gipsy-boys that slouched down street

With roach on withy rods impaled
  Had flown, and swallows met to fly,

And yellow light and leaves prevailed
  And trouble roved the evening sky.
But spite of ghosts who shook their hair
  In clouds and stalked through darker plains,
Still to the wood bridge I'd repair
  Ere autumn palsied into rains.

The fish turned over in the shoal,
  A flash of summer! then came she,
Who when green leaves were lapping cool
  So like a lily dazzled me;
Her basketful of mushrooms got,
  She passed, she called me by my name,
And now whole myriads are forgot
  But kindly Nell will seem the same

Down to my death! Long tarry, Sun,
  That shone upon us two that day,
And autumn's honey breath live on
  The last sighed air that leaves me clay—
Clay! clay! the packing bullets mocked,
  And split the breastwork by my head,
And into aching senses shocked,
  I gave Stand-To! the east was red.

The Idlers

The gipsies lit their fires by the chalk-pit gate anew,
And the hoppled horses supped in the further dusk and dew;
The gnats flocked round the smoke like idlers as they were,
And through the goss and bushes the owls began to churr.

An ell above the woods the last of sunset glowed
With a dusky gold that filled the pond beside the road;
The cricketers had done, the leas all silent lay,
And the carrier's clattering wheels went past and died away.

The gipsies lolled and gossiped, and ate their stolen swedes,
Made merry with mouth-organs, worked toys with piths of reeds:
The old wives puffed their pipes, nigh as black as their hair,
And not one of them all seemed to know the name of care.

The Spell

Loud the wind leaps through the night and fills the valley with his wings,
The bleak fields not a furlong hence, in such black hours as these,
Terrify, so lonely grown; the rain sweeps down to swell the springs
And beats about the happy house where I may take my ease,
And beats with fury far and near
The fields of loneliness and fear.

In the still decline that led the blind year to his misery,
We have walked among the woods and on a sudden heard,
When not a tremor stole through air, the deadly fall from some one tree
Of leaves that knew the time and answered God's unspoken word.
So seems it now with me, my own
Is vacant all: I must be gone.

This might be that selfsame night when good King Lear was running wild
Over the hoarse unglimmering heath, and glorious met the storm;
I would then have followed him, for now I know myself beguiled
By impulse nameless from the hearth, where I might huddle warm,
In tooth of all the storms that ever
Were, to rove the wild lands over.

Almswomen

At Quincey's moat the squandering village ends,
And there in the almshouse dwell the dearest friends
Of all the village, two old dames that cling
As close as any trueloves in the spring.
Long, long ago they passed three-score-and-ten,
And in this doll's house lived together then;
All things they have in common being so poor,
And their one fear, Death's shadow at the door.
Each sundown makes them mournful, each sunrise
Brings back the brightness in their failing eyes.

How happy go the rich fair-weather days
When on the roadside folk stare in amaze
At such a honeycomb of fruit and flowers
As mellows round their threshold; what long hours
They gloat upon their steepling hollyhocks,
Bee's balsams, feathery southernwood and stocks,
Fiery dragons'-mouths, great mallow leaves
For salves, and lemon plants in bushy sheaves,
Shagged Esau's Hands with five green finger-tips!
Such old sweet names are ever on their lips.
As pleased as little children where these grow
In cobbled pattens and worn gowns they go,
Proud of their wisdom when on gooseberry shoots
They stuck egg-shells to fright from coming fruits
The brisk-billed rascals; waiting still to see
Their neighbour owls saunter from tree to tree
Or in the hushing half-light mouse the lane
Long-winged and lordly.
But when those hours wane
Indoors they ponder, scared by the harsh storm
Whose pelting saracens on the window swarm,
And listen for the mail to clatter past
And church clock's deep bay withering on the blast;

They feed the fire that flings a freakish light
On pictured kings and queens grotesquely bright,
Platters and pitchers, faded calendars
And graceful hour-glass trim with lavenders.

Many a time they kiss and cry, and pray
Both may be summoned in the selfsame day,
And wiseman linnet tinkling in his cage
End too with them the friendship of old age,
And all together leave their treasured room
Some bell-like evening when the May's in bloom.

The Failure

I saw the sunlit vale, and the pastoral fairy-tale;
The sweet and bitter scent of the may drifted by;
And never have I seen such a bright bewildering green,
But it looked like a lie,
Like a kindly meant lie.

When gods are in dispute, one a Sidney, one a brute,
It would seem that human sense might not know, might not spy;
But though nature smile and feign where foul play has stabbed and slain,
There's a witness, an eye,
Nor will charms blind that eye.

Nymph of the upland song and the sparkling leafage young,
For your merciful desire with these charms to beguile,
For ever be adored; muses yield you rich reward;
But you fail, though you smile—
That other does not smile.

BRUCE BLUNT

The First Mercy

Ox and ass at Bethlehem
On a night, ye know of them:
We were only creatures small
Hid by shadows on the wall.

We were swallow, moth and mouse;
The Child was born in our house,
And the bright eyes of us three
Peeped at His Nativity.

Hands of peace upon that place
Hushed our beings for a space—
Quiet feet and folded wing,
Nor a sound of anything.

With a moving star we crept
Closer when the Baby slept:
Men who guarded where He lay
Moved to frighten us away.

But the Babe, awakened, laid
Love on things that were afraid,
With so sweet a gesture He
Called us to His company.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

PROLOGUE

Silverdale Village Players: Easter, 1922

Neighbours and friends, we come to-night
To tell a tale and shew a sight
That never since our Silverdale
Was first built up among the pale
Old rocks and woods of oak and fir
And heaths of gorse and juniper,
Nor since the sea first left the land
Then took it back with the other hand,
Has been attempted here as now
We have a mind to try and shew.

We call ourselves the Village Players,
And acting is our game—like theirs
Who, half a thousand years ago,
Before the towns began to grow,
Kept the high feasts of their own places
With plays and dances, painted faces
And lovely clothes and lively tunes
And hearts as eager and light as June's
With all the quiver of Springtime in it
And Summer coming every minute.
The world has changed too much since then,
But, if we like, we later men
Can do as much as anyone
Who ever drew from wind and sun,
From earth and heaven, such life as ours.
We never half explore our powers

Of joy, discovery and delight,
We never get the good we might
Out of our spell of being alive:
It does not matter how much we thrive
If, when there are no more days to live,
Beauty has something still to give.

Beauty of colours and shapes and sounds
And words—by these our life abounds
In things worth having, and there's no way
Of getting them that beats a play.
And all the better we shall get them
If for ourselves we try to net them,
And play ourselves instead of paying
Other people to do our playing
As townsfolk do, and spread the tale
Of Silverdale folk for Silverdale.

So listen well to us to-night,
And, if we do not do it right,
Be judges moved to lenience,
Remember 'tis our first offence,
And bind us over to appear
Before you all another year.

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG

Seascape

Over that morn hung heaviness, until,
Near sunless noon, we heard the ship's bell beating
A melancholy staccato on dead metal;
Saw the bare-footed watch coming running aft;
Felt, far below, the sudden telegraph jangle
Its harsh metallic challenge, thrice repeated:
Stand by. Half-speed ahead. Slow. Stop her! They stopped.
The plunging pistons sank like a stopt heart:
She held, she swayed, a hulk, a hollow carcass
Of blistered iron that the grey-green, waveless,
Unruffled tropic waters slapped languidly.
And, in that pause, a sinister whisper ran:
Burial at sea! A Portuguese official . . .
Poor fever-broken devil from Mocambique:
Came on half-tight: the doctor calls it heat-stroke.
Why do they travel steerage? It's the exchange:
So many million reis to the pound!
What did he look like? No one ever saw him:
Took to his bunk, and drank and drank and died.
They're ready! Silence!
We clustered to the rail,
Curious and half-ashamed. The well-deck spread
A comfortable gulf of segregation
Between ourselves and death. *Burial at sea . . .*
The master holds a black book at arm's length;
His droning voice comes for'ard: *This our brother . . .*
We therefore commit his body to the deep
To be turned into corruption . . .
The bo's'n whispers

Hoarsely behind his hand: *Now, all together!*
The hatch-cover is tilted; a mummy of sail-cloth,
Well ballasted with iron, shoots clear of the poop;
Falls, like a diving gannet. The green sea closes
Its burnished skin; the snaky swell smoothes over . . .
While he, the man of the steerage, goes down, down,
Feet-foremost, sliding swiftly down the dim water:
Swift to escape
Those plunging shapes with pale, empurpled bellies
That swirl and veer about him. He goes down
Unerringly, as though he knew the way
Through green, through gloom, to absolute watery darkness,
Where no weed sways nor curious fin quivers:
To the sad, sunless deeps where, endlessly,
A downward drift of death spreads its wan mantle
In the wave-moulded valleys that shall enfold him
Till the sea give up its dead.

There shall he lie dispersed amid great riches:
Such gold, such arrogance, so many bold hearts!
All the sunken armadas pressed to powder
By weight of incredible seas! That mingled wrack
No livening sun shall visit till the crust
Of earth be riven, or this rolling planet
Reel on its axis; till the moon-chained tides,
Unloosed, deliver up that white Atlantis,
Whose naked peaks shall bleach above the slaked
Thirst of Sahara, fringed by weedy tangles
Of Atlas's drown'd cedars, frowning Eastward
To where the sands of India lie cold,
And heap'd Himalaya's a rib of coral
Slowly uplifted, grain on grain . . .
We dream
Too long! Another jangle of alarum
Stabs at the engines: *Slow. Half-speed. Full-speed!*
The great bearings rumble; the screw churns, frothing

Opaque water to downward-swelling plumes
Milky as woodsmoke. A shoal of flying-fish
Spurts out like animate spray. The warm breeze wakens,
And we pass on, forgetting,
Toward the solemn horizon of bronzed cumulus
That bounds our brooding sea, gathering gloom
That, when night falls, will dissipate in flaws
Of watery lightning, washing the hot sky,
Cleansing all hearts of heat and restlessness,
Until, with day, another blue be born.

The Quails

(In the South of Italy the peasants put out the eyes of a captured quail so that its cries may attract the flocks of spring migrants into their nets)

All through the night
I have heard the stuttering call of a blind quail,
A caged decoy, under a cairn of stones,
Crying for light as the quails cry for love.

Other wanderers,
Northward from Africa winging on numb pinions, dazed
With beating winds and the sobbing of the sea,
Hear, in a breath of sweet land-herbage, the call
Of the blind one, their sister. . . .
Hearing, their fluttered hearts
Take courage, and they wheel in their dark flight,
Knowing that their toil is over, dreaming to see
The white stubbles of Abruzzi smitten with dawn,
And spilt grain lying in the furrows, the squandered gold
That is the delight of quails in their spring mating.

Land-scents grow keener,
Penetrating the dank and bitter odour of brine
That whitens their feathers;

Far below, the voice of their sister calls them
To plenty, and sweet water, and fulfilment.
Over the pallid margin of dim seas breaking,
Over the thickening in the darkness that is land,
They fly. Their flight is ended. Wings beat no more.
Downward they drift, one by one, like dark petals,
Slowly, listlessly falling,
Into the mouth of horror:
The nets . . .

Where men come trampling and crying with bright lanterns,
Plucking their weak, entangled claws from the meshes of net,
Clutching the soft brown bodies mottled with olive,
Crushing the warm, fluttering flesh, in hands stained with blood,
Till their quivering hearts are stilled, and the bright eyes,
That are like a polished agate, glaze in death.

But the blind one, in her wicker cage, without ceasing
Haunts this night of spring with her stuttering call,
Knowing nothing of the terror that walks in darkness,
Knowing only that some cruelty has stolen the light
That is life, and that she must cry until she dies.

I, in the darkness,
Heard, and my heart grew sick. But I know that to-morrow
A smiling peasant will come with a basket of quails
Wrapped in vine-leaves, prodding them with blood-stained fingers,
Saying, "Signore, you must cook them thus, and thus,
With a sprig of basil inside them." And I shall thank him,
Carrying the piteous carcases into the kitchen
Without a pang, without shame.

"Why should I be ashamed? Why should I rail
Against the cruelty of men? Why should I pity,
Seeing that there is no cruelty which men can imagine

To match the subtle dooms that are wrought against them
By blind spores of pestilence: seeing that each of us,
Lured by dim hopes, flutters in the toils of death
On a cold star that is spinning blindly through space
Into the nets of time?"

So cried I, bitterly thrusting pity aside,
Closing my lids to sleep. But sleep came not,
And pity, with sad eyes,
Crept to my side, and told me
That the life of all creatures is brave and pitiful
Whether they be men, with dark thoughts to vex them,
Or birds, wheeling in the swift joys of flight,
Or brittle ephemerids, spinning to death in the haze
Of gold that quivers on dim evening waters;
Nor would she be denied.
The harshness died
Within me, and my heart
Was caught and fluttered like the palpitant heart
Of a brown quail, flying
To the call of her blind sister,
And death, in the spring night.

ROBERT BRIDGES

Come Si Quando

How thickly the far fields of heaven are strewn with stars!
Tho' the open eye of day shendeth them with its glare
yet, if no cloudy wind curtain them nor low mist
of earth blindfold us, soon as Night in grey mantle
wrappeth all else, they appear in their optimacy
from under the ocean or behind the high mountains
climbing in spacious ranks upon the stark-black void.
Ev'n so in our mind's night burn far beacons of thought
and the infinite architecture of our darkness,
the dim essence and being of our mortalities,
is sparkled with fair fire-flecks of eternity
whose measure we know not nor the wealth of their rays.

It happ'd to me sleeping in the Autumn night, what time
Sirius was uplifting his great lamp o'er the hills,
I saw him not—my sight was astray, my wonder
held by the epiphany of a seraphic figure
that was walking on earth: in my visions it was—
I saw one in the full form and delight of man,
the signature of godhead in his motion'd grace
and the aureole of his head was not dimm'd to my view;
the shekinah of azure floating o'er him in the air
seem'd the glow of a fire that burn'd steadfast within
prison'd to feed the radiance of his countenance:
as a lighthouse flasheth over broken waters
a far resistless beam from its strong tower: it was
as if Nature had deign'd to take back from man's hand
some work of her own as art had refashion'd it
—when Giorgione (it might be) portraying the face
of one who had left no memory but that picture

and watching well the features at their play to find
some truth worthy of his skill, caught them for a moment
transfigured by a phantom visitation of spirit
which seizing he drew forth and fix'd on the canvas
as thence it hath gazed out for ever, and once on me.
Even such immanent beauty had that heroic face
and all that look'd on it loved and many worshipp'd.

For me, comfort possess'd me, the intimate comfort
of Beauty that is the soul's familiar angel
who bringeth me alway such joy as a man feeleth
returning to the accustom'd homeliness of home
after long absence or exile among strange things,
and my heart in me was laughing for happiness—
when I saw a great fear fell on the worshippers,
The fear of God: I saw its smoky shadow of dread;
and as a vast Plutonian mountain that burieth
its feet in molten lava and its high peak in heaven,
whenever it hath distrain'd some dark voyaging storm
to lave its granite shoulders, dischargeth the flood
in a thousand torrents o'er its flanks to the plain
and all the land is vocal with the swirl and gush
of the hurrying waters, so suddenly in this folk
a flood of troublous passion arose and mock'd control.

Then I saw the light vanities and follies of man
put on dragonish faces and glour with Gorgon eyes
disowning Shame and Reason, and one poët I saw
who from the interdependence and rivalry of men
loathing his kind had fled into the wilderness
to wander among the beasts and make home of their caves:
like to those Asian hermits colour'd by their clime
who drank the infatuation of the wide torrid sand
the whelming tyranny of the lonely sun by day
the boundless nomadry of the stars by night, who sought
primeval brotherhood with things unbegotten;
who for ultimate comfort clothing them i' the skin
of nakedness wrapt nothingness closely about them

choosing want for wealth and shapeless terrors for friends
in the embrace of desolation and wearied silence
to lie babe-like on the bosom of unpitying power.
But he found not rest nor peace for his soul: I read
his turbulent passion, the blasphemy of his heart
as I stood among the rocks that chuckled the cry
wherewith he upcast reproach into the face of heaven.

"Unveil thine eyes, O THEMIS! Stand, unveil thine eyes!
from the high zenith hang thy balance in the skies!
In one scale set thy Codes of Justice Duty and Awe
thy penal interdicts the tables of thy Law
and in the other the postulant plea of Mercy and Love:
then thine unbandaged sight shall know thy cause how light
and see thy thankless pan fly back to thee above.

"Or wilt thou deeplier wager, an if thou hast the key
to unlock the cryptic storehouse of futurity,
fetch the mint-treasure forth, unpack the Final Cause
whose prime alweighty metal must give Reason pause;
or if 'tis of such stuff as man's wit cannot gauge
scale thou the seal'd deposit in its iron-bound cage
Nay, lengthen out the beam of the balance on thy side
unequal as thou wilt, so that on mine the pan
to hold the thoughts of man be deep enough and wide.

"What Providence is this that maketh sport with Chance
blindly staking against things of no ordinance?
Must the innocent dear birds that singing in the shaw
with motherly instinct wove their nest of twisted straw
see in some icy hail-gust their loved mansion drown'd
and all their callow nurselings batter'd on the ground?
Even so a many-generation'd city of men
the storied temple of their endeavour and amorous ken

is toss'd back into rubbish by a shudder of the earth's crust:
Nor even the eternal stars have any sanction'd trust
that, like ships in dark night ill-fatedly on their course,
they shall not meet and crash together, and all their force
be churn'd back to the vapory magna whence they grew
agelong to plod henceforth their frustrate path anew.

"From this blind wreckage then hath Wisdom no escape
but limitless production of every living shape?
How shall man honour this Demiurge and yet keep
in due honour the gift that he rateth so cheap?
Myriad seeds perfected that one seed may survive—
Millions of men, that Reason in a scant few may thrive
Multiplication alike of good bad strong and weak
and the overflow of life more wasteful than the leak.

"And what this treasure, of which, so prodigal of the whole
he granteth unto each pensioner in such niggard dole?
its short lease on such terms as only can be enjoy'd
against some equal title invaded or destroy'd?
What is this banquet where the guests are served for meat?
What hospitality? What kind of host is he
the bill of whose purveyance is *Kill ye each other and eat?*

"Or why, if the excellence of conscient Reason is such,
the accomplishment so high, that it renounce all touch
of kindness with its kin and humbler parentage
—building the slaughter-house beside the pasturage—
Why must this last best most miraculous flower of all
be canker'd at the core, prey to the spawn and spawl
of meanest motes? must stoop from its divine degree
to learn the spire and spilth of every insensate filth
that swarmeth in the chaos of obscenity?

"And if the formless ferment of life's primal slime
bred without stint, and came through plant and beast in time

to elaborate the higher appurtenance of sex
Why should this low-born urgency persist to vex
man's growth in grace? for sure the procreant multitude
would riot to outcrowd the earth wer't not for lack of food,
and thus the common welfare serveth but to swell
the common woe, whereat the starvelings more rebel.
See, never hungry horde of savage raiders slipp'd
from Tartary's parching steppes so for destruction equipp'd
as midst our crowded luxury now the sneaking swarm
that pilfereth intelligence from Science to storm
Civilization in her well-order'd citadel.
Thus Culture doeth herself to death reinforcing hell
and seeth no hope but this, that what she hath wrought in vain
since it was wrought before, may yet be wrought again
and fall to a like destruction again and evermore.

"And what Man's Mind? since even without this foul offence
it breedeth its own poison of its own excellence:
it riseth but to fall deeper, it cannot endure.
Attainment stayeth pursuit and being itself impure
dispiriteth the soul. All power engendereth pride
and poor vainglory seeing its image magnified
upon the ignoble mirror of common thought, will trust
the enticements of self-love and the flattery thereof
and call on fame to enthrone ambition and mortal lust.

"Wherefore, since Reason assureth neither final term
nor substantive foundations impeccable and firm
as brutish instincts are—and Virtue in default
goeth down before the passions crowding to the assault;
Nothing being justified all things are ill or well
are justifiable alike or unjustifiable
till, whether in mocking laughter or mere melancholy
Philosophy will turn to vindicate folly:
and if thro' thought it came that man first learnt his woe,
his Memory accumulating the recorded sum

his Prescience anticipating fresh ills to come,
How could it be otherwise? Why should it not be so?

"And last, O worst! for surely all wrongs had else been nought
had never Imagination exalted human thought
with spiritual affection of tenderness intense
beyond all finest delicacy of bodily sense;
so that the gift of tears, that is the fount of song
maketh intolerable agony of Nature's wrong.
Ask her that taught man filial love, what she hath done
the mother of all mothers, she unto her own dear son?
him innocently desirous to love her well
by unmotherly cruelty she hath driven to rebel,
hath cast out in the night homeless and to his last cry
for guidance on his way hath deign'd him no reply.

"And thou that in symbolic mockery feign'st to seal
thine eyes from horrors that thou hast no heart to feel,
Thou, THEMIS, wilt suspect not the celestial weight
of the small parcels that I now pile on the plate.
These are love's bereavements and the blightings of bloom
the tears of mourners inconsolable at the tomb
of promise wither'd and fond hope blasted in prime:
These, the torrential commiserations of all time
These, the crime-shrieks of war plague-groans and famine-cries
These, the slow-standing tears in children's questioning eyes
These, profuse tears of fools, These, coy tears of the wise
in solitude bewailing and in sad silence
the perishing record of hard-won experience
Ruin of accomplishment that no toil can restore
Heroic Will chain'd down on Fate's cold dungeon-floor.
See here the tears of prophets, the confessors of faith
the tears of beauty-lovers, merchants of the unpriced
in calumny and reproach, in want, wanhope and death
persecuted betray'd imprison'd sacrificed;
All tears from Adam's tears unto the tears of Christ.

"Look to thy balance, THEMIS; Should thy scale descend
bind up thine eyes again, I shall no more contend;
for if the Final Cause vindicate Nature's laws
her universal plan giveth no heed to man
No place; for him Confusion is his Final Cause."

Thus threw he to the wilderness and silent sky
his outrageous despair the self-pity of mankind
and the disburdenment of his great heaviness
left his heart suddenly so shaken and unsteadied
he seem'd like one who fording a rapid river
and poising on his head a huge stone that its weight
may plant his footing firmly and stiffen his body upright
against the rushing water, hath midway let it fall
and with his burden hath lost his balance, and staggering
into the bubbling eddy is borne helpless away.
Even so a stream of natural feeling o'erwhelm'd him
whether of home maybe and childhood or of lovers' eyes
of fond friendship and service, or perchance he felt
himself a rebel untaught who had pilfer'd Wisdom's arms
to work disorder and havoc in the city of God:
For suddenly he was dumbstruck and with humbled step
of unwitting repentance he stole back to his cave
and wrapping his poor rags about him took his way
again to his own people and the city whence he had fled.
There in the market-place a wild haggard figure
I saw him anon where high above a surging crowd
he stood waving his hands like some prophet of old
dream-sent to warn God's people; but them the strong words
of his chasten'd humanity inflame but the more;
forwhy they cannot suffer mention of holiness
nor the sound of the names that convince them of sin
If there be any virtue, if there be any praise
'tis not for them to hear of or think on those things.

I saw what he spake to them tho' I heard it not
only at the sting thereof the loud wrath that arose.
As a wild herd of cattle on the prairie pasturing
if they are aware of one amongst them sick or maim'd
or in some part freak-hued differently from themselves
will be moved by instinct of danger and set on him
and bowing all their heads drive him out with their horns
as enemy to their selfwill'd community;
even such brutish instinct impell'd that human herd
and some had stoop'd to gather loose stones from the ground
and were hurling at him: he crouch'd with both his arms
covering his head and would have hid himself from them
in fear more of their crime than of his own peril.
Then with a plunge of terror he turn'd and fled for life
and they in wild joy of the chase with hue and cry
broke after him and away and bent on sport to kill
hunted their startled game before them down the streets.
Awhile he escaped and ran apart, but soon I saw
the leaders closing on him—I was hiding my eyes
lest I should see him taken and torn in blood, when, lo!
the street whereon they ran was block'd across his way
by a whiterobed throng that came moving with solemn pace
waving banners and incense and high chant on the air,
and bearing 'neath a rich canopy of reverence
their object of devotion—as oft in papal Rome
was seen vying with pomps of earthly majesty
or now on Corpus Christi day thro' Westminster
in babylonish exile paradeth our roads—
and as I looked in wonder on the apparition, I saw
the hunted man into their midst dash'd wildly and fell.
'Twas like as when a fox that long with speed and guile
hath resolutely outstay'd the yelling murderous pack
if when at last his limbs fail him and he knoweth
the hounds hot on his trail and himself quite outworn
will in desperation forgo his native fear
and run for refuge into some hamlet of men

and there will enter a cotter's confined cabin and plead
panting with half-closed eyes to the heart of his foe,
altho' he knoweth nought of the Divinity
of that Nature to whom he pleadeth, nor knoweth
ev'n that he pleadeth, yet he pleadeth not in vain
—so great is Nature—for the good wife hath pity,
will suffer him to hide there under settle or bed
until the hunt be pass'd, will cheer him and give him
milk of her children's share until he be restor'd
when she will let him forth to his roguish freedom again—
So now this choral convoy of heavenly pasture
gave ready succour and harbour to the hunted man
and silencing their music broke their bright-robed ranks
to admit him and again closed round him where foredone
he fell down in their midst: and hands I saw outstretch'd
to upraise him, but when he neither rose up nor stirr'd
they knelt aghast, and one who in solemn haste came up
and by the splendour of his apparel an elder seem'd,
bent over him there and whisper'd sacred words whereat
he motion'd and gave sign, and offering his dumb mouth
took from the priestly fingers such food as is dealt
unto the dying, and when the priest stood up I knew
for his gesture and silence that the man was dead.

Then feet and head his body in fair linen winding
they raised and bore along with dirge and shriving prayer
such as they use when one of their own brotherhood
after mortal probation has enter'd into rest
and they will bury his bones where Christ at his coming
shall bid them all arise from their tombs in the church
Whereto their long procession now went filing back
Threading the streets, and dwarfed beneath the bright façade
crept with its head to climb the wide steps to the porch
whereunder, as ever there they arrived, the dark doorway
swallowed them out of sight: and still the train came on
with lurching bannerets and tottering canopy

threading the streets and mounting to the shadowy porch
arriving entering disappearing without end
when I awoke, the dirge still sounding in my ears
the night wind blowing thro' the open window upon me
as I lay marvelling at the riddle of my strange dream.

Emily Brontë

"Du hast Diamanten"

Thou hadst all Passion's splendor,
  Thou hadst abounding store
Of heaven's eternal jewels,
  Beloved; what wouldst thou more?

Thine was the frolic freedom
  Of creatures coy and wild,
The melancholy of wisdom,
  The innocence of a child,

The mail'd will of the warrior,
  That buckled in thy breast
Humility as of Francis,
  The Self-surrender of Christ;

And of God's cup thou drankest
  The unmingled wine of Love,
Which makes poor mortals giddy
  When they but sip thereof.

What was't to thee thy pathway
  So rugged mean and hard,
Whereon when Death surprised thee
  Thou gavest him no regard?

What was't to thee, enamour'd
As a red rose of the sun,
If of thy myriad lovers
Thou never sawest one?

Nor if of all thy lovers
That are and were to be
None ever had their vision,
O my belov'd, of thee,

Until thy silent glory
Went forth from earth alone,
Where like a star thou gleamest
From thine immortal throne.

Fortunatus Nimium

I

I have lain in the sun,
I have toiled as I might,
I have thought as I would,
And now it is night.

II

My bed full of sleep,
My heart of content
For mirth that I met
The way that I went.

III

I welcome fatigue
While frenzy and care,
Like thin summer clouds,
Go melting in air.

IV

To dream as I may
And awake when I will,
With the song of the birds
And the sun on the hill.

V

Or death—were it death,
To what should I wake,
Who loved in my home
All life for its sake?

VI

What good have I wrought?
I laugh to have learned
That joy cannot come
Unless it be earned:

VII

For a happier lot
Than God giveth me
It never hath been
Nor ever shall be.

RUPERT BROOKE

Fafaïa

Stars that seem so close and bright,
Watched by lovers through the night,
Swim in emptiness, men say,
Many a mile and year away.

And yonder star that burns so white,
May have died to dust and night
Ten, maybe, or fifteen year,
Before it shines upon my dear.

Oh! often among men below,
Heart cries out to heart, I know,
And one is dust a many years,
Child, before the other hears.

Heart from heart is all as far,
Fafaïa, as star from star.

SAANAPU,
November 1913.

FRANCIS BURROWS

Nature's Fruitfulness

This summer on our yard-wall there does swing
  A groundsel-bush from one seed last year sown.
A burnet moth, sun-wakened in the Spring,
  Flew out and laid its hundred eggs thereon.

An hundred seeds each blossom on it gives,
An hundred caterpillars eat its leaves.

Its plumed seeds scattered by the wind now fall
  Into our yard on water and on stone.
  Here too the caterpillars over blown
Gyrate and starve, for few can climb the wall.

Next year again there will be one of both:
One bush of groundsel and one burnet moth.

WITTER BYNNER

A Dynasty

Beside the reckless music of a line of waterfalls,
Tuning my toes in the songs they throw away,
I sit so still a spider takes my knees for his walls,
And I do not know what year it is, I know only the day
And the little singing moment when a spotted moth and I
Are untroubled with each other as the shade is with the sun,
She at last convinced that I am glad a worm can fly
And I understanding why her tail moves up and down.
Two pigeons are intoning, like carriers in Hangchow,
Two cat-birds are fighting, like generals toward Peking;
And if I were not sitting here, there might be much to do.
But the best the world has taught me is to be at ease and sing,
To disregard the generals, the conjurer that rules,
The thousand bits of nonsense that make a matter wise,
And to share the lighter reason of a dynasty of fools
Whose premiers are waterfalls, whose courtiers butterflies.

ARCHIBALD Y. CAMPBELL

The Panic

Pale in her evening silks she sat,
  That but a week had been my bride;
Then, while the stars we wondered at,
  Without a word she left my side;
Devious and silent as a bat,
  I watched her round the garden glide.

Soon o'er the moonlit lawn she streamed,
  Then floated idly down the glade;
Now like a forest nymph she seemed,
  Now like a light within a shade;
She turned, and for a moment gleamed,
  And suddenly I saw her fade.

I had been held in tranced stare
  Till she had vanished from my sight;
Then did I start in wild despair,
  And followed fast in mad affright;
What if herself a spirit were,
  And had so soon rejoined the night?

The Firstborn

While the chill dawn was breaking, with moist eye,
  Wonder, and heartbeat, joy, doubt, aching bones,
Finding strange magic in that wan, cold sky,
  I, that had heard all night thy mother's groans,
First caught thy shrill, small cry.

Who parted life from life? What thing whence came?
How, in one instant, woke thy little soul?
Which moment earned for me a father's name?
These, and the grey dawn, o'er my senses stole,
One mystery and the same.

Spring and Poetry

Now Spring returns with leaf and blade,
Some seek the garden, some the glade;
And all to Nature turn, but I
To the fresh fields of Poetry.

Sweet are the first green leaves, and sweet
The scents, and genial the first heat;
And backed by pine or cypress glooms
How rich the rhododendron blooms!

Yet rich or sweet as these appear,
They were as wonderful last year;
And all as then move without pause
Through the same course by the same laws.

The flowers I meet in song are new;
None shall forecast their shape or hue;
To none of your dull round belong
The seasons that unfold in song.

The trees that sung in verse I find
Are each its own, an unknown, kind;
But best in all, tree, season, flower,
Is, there's no limit to their power.

Earth's tulip in her splendours dressed
Is yet a tulip at the best;
Or shall a grove heal human grief?
One leaf is like another leaf.

Mays eight and thirty have I known
Thrill each my senses, till 'twas flown;
Yet doubt if one, that pranked the ground,
Left my soul happier than it found.

The bluebell mist in the deep wood
Has often made me think life good;
Blue still they crowd by many a tree,
But I see no less misery.

In lilac blooms put not your trust;
Heavenly their smell is, but they rust;
Nor let laburnums gain great hold
On your deep heart with their brief gold.

Ten million beech-trees have I seen
Put forth ten thousand leaves of green;
But never yet, in grove or glade,
Found I the leaf that would not fade.

The gardens of the Muse remain,
Where I can come, and come again;
The Fancy's flowers are ever bright,
Faint not at noon, close not at night.

What was once, is still beautiful;
This can I through all seasons cull;
And culled once, will continue dewed,
Or if it droop can be renewed.

The woods of song endure and change;
Those I love best I still find strange,
And therefore never quite despair
The cure of life to light on there.

For when the snow lay thick around,
And there was neither tint nor sound,
And Fate's will was not as my will,
I thought last winter, and think still.

The hope that fails not, the one scent
That leaves the spiritual sense content,
The fruit that may redeem the fall,
Shall be plucked here, or not at all.

OLWEN W. CAMPBELL

Eclipse (*November* 1925)

First stole the moon's dead body past our sun,
  Darken'ng the day one golden afternoon:
Next fell retributive our shadow dun
  Upon the round full moon.

Such things in heaven are rare: but man, a shade,
  Fast spreading Shadows drives upon his course,
Guideless, and shadowed by the moons he made
  Of memory and remorse.

And if at length full dawning Joy he sees,
  Already Time's slow shadow gnaws the rim:
Joy waning, he pursues the Shadow Peace;
  Then Death eclipses him.

G. K. CHESTERTON

Sonnets in Summer Heat

I

I too have dreamed of dark titanic rose.
Hot in the Hanging Gardens of the Sun,
Grass-blanched and blasted where the Unspeakable One
Blazed in the mirror of the face of Moses,
Or goblin gourds the slow green dawn discloses
Enormous in quiet isles no sail has won,
Or purple Persian forests crushed, whereon
Some rock-hewn monster like a realm reposes.

But though I sought dark fruits that thrive in thunder
And dusky sunflowers turned to alien suns,
I did not seek for wonders, but for wonder,
Nor these wild images but more innocent ones:
I looked for my lost eyes: which long ago
Saw one red daisy in the flower-pot grow.

II

Tall tiger rocks striped with the strata stand
Against the devouring glories of the sun,
Dry wells like dragons drink the sands that run,
Red and dark grey and purple and silver sand:
And all the multi-coloured waste is fanned
With fans of dissolution and eclipse:
The hollow swells with horror and the hill slips
The changing rocks of this enchanted land.

So moves the Desert: and the whole world's pride
Is dust, yet knew itself for more than mire,

When driven with the blast of all the world's desire
Dry-throated thirst deep as the desert cried
When God ungirt of column of cloud and fire
Came out of Egypt to be crucified.

III

Blue with the bloom of darkest grapes the night,
The fruited night hangs swollen, as some divine
New Deluge not of water but of wine
Might drown us not in death, but in delight:
And purple tropic torrents from the height
Madden the world's weeds from their flat design
And new shapes dance and nameless colours shine
Dizzying deep roots: the Dionysian light.

The heavens are sealed: and though we thrive we thirst
For that most holy Vine that holds the sky,
The clouds the seer called bottles, that do not burst,
Abide the breaking of that ancient cry:
I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine
Till with dead men I drink a deathless wine.

GWEN CLEAR

The Goodwife Relents

My dear, I cannot tell
How it could come about
That we who loved so well
Should turn to falling out.
But since the spring is come
With running sap and leaves
Strong-shooting from the boughs
And swallows in the eaves;
Since spring is come with rain
To green and hidden ditches,
We'll mend the purse of love
With quick and purposed stitches.
Haste, April flies,
The winter bridge is down—
You must to the market
And I must to the town.

For you must buy a horse
And a cow, and a cart;
And I must buy a quartern loaf
And half a gooseberry tart.
You must buy a rake
And a shovel and a hoe,
And I must buy some flowering chintz
And yards of calico.
O and a rug with fringes
To spread along the floor,
And half-an-ounce of aniseed,
And a handle for the door.

The gate is off its hinges,
The thatch is working down,
Hey Love, to the market,
And Ho Love, to the town.

My dear, I cannot tell
How it could come about
That we, who loved so well,
Should turn to falling out.
But since the spring is come
We'll have no more denying
Of one who hid his wings
Yet secretly was flying.
Since spring is come with rain,
And with the leaves of clover
And lovelier celandine
The fields are sprinkled over,
Haste, April flies,
I bid you, Love, be merry,
Where singing hangs the thrush
Beneath the flowering cherry!

Fiddle Song

Sometimes beside a violin I stand
And look from the fine fiddle to my hand,
And back again where potent music lies
Pent up within its technicalities.
Music's quiescence mocks me where I stand,
Silent, beside its mute intricacies.

There are three friends, and two know not each other.
The Soul stands whispering sweetly—"Sister . . . Brother . . ."
The World's unuttered music hides within . . .
And yet the hand knows not the violin.

PADRAIC COLUM

The Deer of Ireland

An old man said, "I saw
The chief of the things that are gone;
A stag with head held high,
A doe, and a fawn;

"And they were the deer of Ireland
That scorned to breed within bound:
The last; they left no race
Tame on a pleasure ground.

"A stag, with his hide all rough
With the dew, and a doe and a fawn;
Near by, on their track on the mountain
I watched them, two and one,

"Down to the Shannon going—
Did its waters cease to flow,
When they passed, they that carried the swiftness,
And the pride of long ago?

"The last of the troop that had heard
Finn's and Oscar's cry;
A doe and a fawn, and before,
A stag with head held high!"

A. E. COPPARD

The Unfortunate Miller

On windy days the mill
  Turned with a will,
But on calm days it spread
  Its four sails—dead.

The one-eyed miller man
  Laments that ban,
And to the windless sky
  Turning his vexed eye:

"God help," he sadly says,
  "This business;
A hundred days and more
  The wind's forbore,

And lacking breezes I
  Am bound to die;
The profit I've forgone
  In offal and grist alone

Would have bought a cock and a hen,
  A gelt for my pen,
And a row of asters planted
  Just where I wanted;

But since the wind is still—
  The devil take the mill!
Never it rains but pours—
  Let's in-a-doors."

So in-a-doors goes he
To see—alas to see—
Not the scrapings of pan or pot
In his famished cot.

The tap of the clock indoors,
The dusty floors,
His empty crock and purse,
Made bad seem worse.

He looked at himself in a glass—
So thin he was!
He looked at the time and date—
Too late! Too late!

And creeping again to the mill
That stood stone still,
He tied round his neck the loop
Of a long dark rope.

Drove a tenpenny nail
Into the mill's black sail,
Hung his watch on a shelf,
Then hung himself.

And lo, the wind came! Beshrew,
How the wind blew!
And the sails and the miller dying
Went flying, flying.

The Young Man Under the Walnut-Tree

Observe the rotund galleries of this walnut-tree,
Its shales of dull stiff wax
Ushering a pool of air, a pool and a green pavilion,
Wherein, sweet tyrant sun, the majesty of shade
Dips a forefinger gilded with your bloom
To paint her modest brows.

Behold the wimpling rye,
The ewes, the poppies steeped in flagrant sun,
Silent, silent, silent; but the lark
Flying as it sings, singing only as it flies,
Spices with diamond noise the gleaming air.

O golden world, that in your glorious dust
Treasures the trick of Being,
How we, all credulous, obey you!
We are but the habits of the earth,
Its passion for similitude,
For forms and forms again and forms.
This fond bereavement from oblivion,
This thrusting of pale buds from out the branching darkness,
Was once with languor, with besieging sleep,
Lapped like a dream within a dream
Till life, life in a splendid pause,
Began its crepitation,
Broke into form, engendering from the dust
Walnuts and things like me,
This clutching honeysuckle drunken-fumed,
The blind newt moving,
And martins marvellous in the sky.

O wild sweet dust,
Dreaming the unsleeping dream
Of flagrant poppy, honeysuckle, breeze,
Bird in the rye, earth, life, oblivion,
From you we follow and flow,
To you we falter and fall;
You who are full of love,
Love that is born of wonder and dies on the empty air.

But love shall have days of honour
Ere the defeat of love,
And fine nights to dream in
Her deep bed of rest.

FRANCES CORNFORD

Rhyme for a Phonetician

Brave English language, you are strong as trees,
Yet intricate and stately. Thus one sees
Through branches clear-embroidered stars. You please
Our sense as damask roses on the breeze,
And barns that smell of hay, and bread-and-cheese.
Rustic yet Roman, yours are dignities
Sonorous as the seas sound. On my knees
I would give thanks for all your words. Yet these—
Our legacy and our delight—he'd squeeze
And nip and dock and drill, to write with ease
Komershul memoz faw the Pawchoogeese.

CHARLES DALMON

Edward Thomas

No slowworm dropped its tail for him;
  No squirrel clicked its heels in scorn;
Because he shared in every whim
  Of every little creature born.

For his amusement, bluetits did
  Their funny acrobatic tricks;
And efts and water-beetles slid
  On floating leaves, or swimming sticks.

The shadow of a passing bird
  Would touch and thrill him with delight;
And he could hear each silent word
  Old empty houses speak at night.

The language of a quiet place
  In lonely woods became his own;
And Nature met him face to face,
  And mated with him there alone.

He knew the voice of every tree;
  He caught the song of summer heat;
While growing grass for him could be
  Sweet lyrics singing at his feet.

And bank voles listened when he said:
  "My pretty ones, don't venture far;
Eyases and owlets must be fed
  Continually—so there you are!"

Pied wagtails had a fearless eye
When he was close beside their nest:
And I have seen a linnet fly
And cling and flutter at his breast.

The Land of Ghosts beyond the sun
Must be a pleasant land to find,
If it is good enough for one
So understanding, and so kind.

Two in a Body

This house of flesh and bone
Which he and I
Together occupy—
Together, yet alone—
May not belong to me,
And I may be the visitor, not he.

For what am I, and what
Is there at all
That I may surely call
My own? And may it not
So be that I am here
But as his pensioner from year to year?

Till now, I cannot trace
The deeds that give
Me any right to live
One moment in the place;
While he may hold a scrip
Establishing his claim to ownership.

He seems my friend, and yet
I scarcely know
How far it may be so;

I hesitate to let
My thoughts incline
To one who seems both much and little mine.

When I in mirrors look,
And in them see
Myself surveying me,
As from a pictured book,
I sometimes think he tries
To meet me at the windows of my eyes:

But nothing real occurs
For my poor sake;
Pupil and iris make
Unkindly barriers
Between us, that remain
To baffle me, again and yet again.

And just so much I know
Of him: no more.
And if I push each door
Wide open as I go
In search of him, he still
Evades me; and I fear he always will.

This tenement of clay
We live in must
Soon crumble into dust,
And vanish all away
From any sight of men:
And where will he and I be living then?

W. H. DAVIES

Timepieces

You false Church clock, whose long-drawn chimes
  Tell me Life moves like some slow snail—
The watch beneath my pillow beats
  So fast my breath doth almost fail.
Your solemn chime, that says I walk
  Sedately to my grave—doth lie;
I gallop faster to my doom
  Than any mortal bird can fly.
I gallop like a startled horse,
  That leaping flames and whirlwinds chase—
Until his eyes have left his head,
  And stretch beyond his frantic face.

Love's Caution

Tell them, when you are home again,
  How warm the air was now;
How silent were the birds and leaves,
  And of the moon's full glow;
    And how we saw afar
    A falling star:
It was a tear of pure delight
Ran down the face of Heaven this happy night.

Our kisses are but love in flower
  Until that greater time
When, gathering strength, those flowers take wing,
  And Love can reach his prime.

And now, my heart's delight,
Good night, good night;
Give me the last sweet kiss—
But do not breathe at home one word of this!

EDWARD DAVISON

The Ugly Duckling

At last the cygnet, preening his plumed snow,
Wins the mid-stream. Mark his new beauty well!
Erect, uplit he sails; in the clear flow
Reflected, breast and wing,
And proud beak winnowing
The April air, all carved like a sea-shell.

Out of deformity he grew to this
Divinest form, burgeoning on the stream,
A living water-flower. He scorned the hiss
And cackle in those ranks
That watched him from the banks;
He knew what seed he was: he had his dream.

And the dream raised the seed and moulded him
In its own secret image, secretly:
Refashioned him, curved serpentine and slim
That delicate white neck
Feathered without a fleck,
Taught him his poise, shaped him the thing you see.

O Thou that shepherdest the waddling geese
Upon the flowery banks of Helicon,
Bid the hoarse gabble, the upbraiding, cease,
And guide Thy flock to see
How lonely and leisurely
Sails on this sunny river the young swan.

Epigram

Since I have seen the harvest-moon
  How heavy lies the fallow mind;
O Lord, send forth Thy ploughmen soon
  While yet the seeds are on the wind.

WALTER DE LA MARE

The Suicide

Did these night-hung houses,
Of quiet, starlit stone,
Breathe not a whisper of "Stay,
Thou unhappy one;
Whither so secret away?"

Sighed not the unfriending wind,
Chill with nocturnal dew,
"Pause, pause, in thy haste,
O thou distraught! I too
Tryst with the Atlantic waste."

Steep fell the drowsy street;
In slumber the world was blind:
Breathed not one midnight flower
Peace in thy broken mind?—
"Brief, yet sweet, is life's hour."

Syllabled thy last tide—
By as dark moon stirred,
And doomed to forlorn unrest—
Not one compassionate word?—
"Cold is this breast."

In the Dock

Pallid, misshapen he stands. The world's grimed thumb,
  Now hooked securely in his matted hair,
Has haled him struggling from his poisonous slum
  And flung him mute as fish close-netted there.

His bloodless hands entalon that iron rail;
He gloats in beastlike trance; his settling eyes
From staring face to face rove on—and quail.
Justice for carrion pants; and these the flies.

Voice after voice in smooth impartial drone
Erects horrific in his darkening brain
A timber framework, where agape, alone
Bright life will kiss good-bye the cheek of Cain.

Sudden, like wolf he cries; and sweats to see
When howls man's soul, it howls inaudibly.

Suppose

Suppose . . . and suppose that a wild little Horse of Magic
Came cantering out of the sky,
With bridle of silver, and into the saddle I mounted
To fly—and to fly;

And we stretched up into the air, fleeting on in the sunshine,
A speck in the gleam
On galloping hoofs, his mane in the wind out-flowing,
In a shadowy stream;

And, oh, when, all lone, the gentle star of evening
Came crinkling into the blue,
A magical castle we saw in the air, like a cloud of moonlight,
As onward we flew;

And across the green moat on the drawbridge we foamed and we snorted;
And there was a beautiful Queen
Who smiled at me strangely, and spoke to my wild little Horse, too—
A lovely and beautiful Queen;

Suppose with delight she cried to her delicate maidens:
"Behold my daughter—my dear!"
And they crowned me with flowers, and then to their harps sate playing,
Solemn and clear;

And magical cakes and goblets were spread on the table;
And at window the birds came in;
Hopping along with bright eyes, pecking crumbs from the platters,
And sipped of the wine;

And splashing up—up to the roof tossed fountains of crystal;
And Princes in scarlet and green
Shot with their bows and arrows, and kneeled with their dishes
Of fruits for the Queen;

And we walked in a magical garden, with rivers and bowers,
And my bed was of ivory and gold;
And the Queen breathed soft in my ear a song of enchantment—
And I never grew old. . . .

And I never, never came back to the earth, oh, never and never;
How mother would cry and cry!
There'd be snow on the fields then, and all these sweet flowers in the winter
Would wither and die. . . .

Suppose . . . and suppose . . .

AUSTIN DOBSON

To Edmund Gosse

In darkening days, when old desires
Die slowly down, like fading fires,
What cheers us most is still the cry
Of those who look for larger sky,
And find, with every cloud withdrawn,
Fresh promise of an ampler dawn.
Your voice of yore was joined with these,
I wish you therefore Hope and Ease,
Health, and continued power to please.

Christmas 1920.

To a Lyric Poet

When you bid me discuss
  The *status* poetic,
'Tis likely that thus
  I may grow homiletic.

Who looks with old eyes
  On the verse-world around him,
Sees much to surprise,
  And more to astound him.

The old lights have ceased;
  Late suns are subsiding;
New stars have increased—
  There are others in hiding!

Old themes are out-classed;
Old standards are altered
(Let us not stone the Past
If its mission has faltered!);

And then, as it seems,
Defying Apollo,
There are metrical schemes
Not easy to follow!

But, where there are bells
There must also be ringers,
And where the heart swells
There will always be singers.

And each singer that sings,
Must chant as he chooses,
And the least likely things
To be "scrapped" are the Muses.

Yes: Song must endure,
Nothing mortal can stop it;
Let us build it up sure,
Let us skilfully prop it!

It lightens men's play,
It softens their sorrow;
It will serve for To-day,
It will stay for To-morrow;

It will end—with the Race:
And one minstrel rejoices
To have lived—by God's grace—
To join in the voices.

LORD DUNSANY

Nemesis

One lied and broke his word,
  Almost I thought to hear
  Nemesis striding near.
Yet not a footstep stirred.

Then, to a lonely place
  By strong dreams borne away,
  Far from his tracks astray
I saw her grim Greek face.

"Never she draweth near;
  I erred," I thought. She saith
  "On his neck is my breath,
My footfall in his ear."

COLIN ELLIS

The Last Bottle

In all good things lurks bitterness,
And I am sad to think
That there will soon be left one less
Good wine on earth to drink.
With grave, unhurried obsequies
It sinks and circles slow
To join the vanished vintages
We lived too late to know.

But, lest the joys we seek to save
Should find their day gone by
And change a prison for a grave
Or in the cellar die,
Let no more idle moments pass
But pass the wine about;
For while you pause to fill your glass
Your glass is running out.

The empty bin we now regret
Our sons may live to see
Filled with a vintage finer yet
Than port of '63.
And yet—whoever is my friend
And at my table dines
Shall join in drinking at the end
The toast of ABSENT WINES.

The Devout Angler

The years will bring their anodyne
But I shall never quite forget
The fish that I had counted mine
And lost before they reached the net.

Last night I put my rod away
Remorseful and disconsolate,
Yet I had suffered yesterday
No more than I deserved from fate,

And as I scored another trout
Upon my list of fish uncaught,
I should have offered thanks, no doubt,
For salutary lessons taught.

Alas! Philosophy avails
As little as it used to do:
More comfort is there still in tales
That may be, or may not be true.

Is it not possible to pray
That I may see those fish once more?
—I hear a voice that seems to say,
"They are not lost but gone before."

When in my pilgrimage I reach
The river that we all must cross
And land upon that further beach
Where earthly gains are counted loss

May I not earthly loss repair?
Well, if those fish should rise again,
There shall be no more parting there—
Celestial gut will stand the strain.

And, issuing from the portal, one
Who was himself a fisherman
Will drop his keys and, shouting, run
To help me land leviathan.

Head and Heart

I put my hand upon my heart
And swore that we should never part—
I wonder what I should have said
If I had put it on my head.

Unforgivable

With Peter I refuse to dine:
His jokes are older than his wine.

Unforgiven

With Paul I have not lately dined:
My jokes were broader than his mind.

BRONWEN EVANS

Domestic Thoughts in a Bath-Room

After a tired day the cold clean paint
Smiles cheerfully in swathes of placid white;
And all the taps laugh in their brazen way
Winking in fits and starts towards the light

Until the steam enshrouds them, one by one . . .
And into clear green water slide from me,
Into the glass-clear ripples all around,
The daily cares of domesticity.

With drowsy hand I make the eddies play,
Forgetting, as they cleanly dance about,
Those eddies in the sink, when down the pipe
The thick brown water clucks and gurgles out.

And I forget potato-skins encrusted
With little lumps of hard unfriendly mould;
And sullen saucepans waiting to be polished;
And clinging paste refusing to be rolled;

And I forget that sad diurnal skirmish,
Chasing elusive dust on polished wood;
And I forget that tired persistent wonder
If cleanliness is really any good.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

Ishak's Song

Thy dawn, O Master of the World, thy dawn,
The hour the lilies open on the lawn,
The hour the grey wings pass beyond the mountains,
The hour of silence when we hear the fountains,
The hour that dreams are brighter and winds colder,
The hour that young love wakes on a white shoulder,
O Master of the World, the Persian dawn!

This hour, O Master, shall be bright for thee:
Thy merchants chase the morning down the sea,
The braves who fight thy fight unsheath the sabre,
The slaves who toil thy toil are lashed to labour,
For thee the waggons of the world are drawn—
The ebony of night, the red of dawn!

F. V. FOLLETT

Cobbett in Wiltshire

(*Rural Rides*, August 1826)

He rode to the wicket and reined his horse in
Where steepled the hollyhocks over the wall
And gazed on a woman who, neat as a pin,
With two sunny children found joy in their ball.

All rosy with playing they stared up as one
To glimpse the strange rider whose waistcoat glared red,
While scarcely they breathed till his question was done
Whom Tangley enclosures and by-path misled.

"Pray, tell me the near way towards Ludgershall
That stands from this cottage some four miles ahead?"
Afresh romped her young ones where clattered the ball . . .
"*I never was there in my travels!*" she said.

"Nor Marlborough, Andover . . . scarce nine miles away?"
Her eyes lit with laughter, her sweet lips were mute.
"How far from this thatch have you strayed in your day?"
"*I've been up in the Parish and over to Chute!*"

Yet, oh, she was winsomely happy and wise!
Her daffodil beauty remotely was spun
And Tangley's vexed footpaths led bright from her eyes
Whose voyaging acres lay small in the sun.

JOHN FREEMAN

Old Testament

I slept awhile, then woke. The night was wild
With the high East Wind's howling—a black hound
That snarled, and rattled at the casement latch,
And shook dry mortars down the twisted flue.
Hound answered hound and both together lifted
Harsh angry notes, and sadder notes that filled
The hapless ear with fright.
I slept and waked at whiles, all hours, and heard
The howling though I slept.
At last, asleep or waking, all was hushed
And from the hush and dark—

Childish familiar images, ghosts of the nights
Of childish loneliness and wonders and fears,
Terrors that drummed my heart then echoing now
The aching drumming. Whose was that figure, tall,
Gray and still as a juniper at twilight?
Lot's wife, Pillar of Salt, with blind face towards
Sodom and Gomorrah smouldering in the Plain.
Turn, turn, hoar frozen Pillar, turn yet thine eyes!
Smouldering and guttering in the Plain they lie,
A sullen bubble of fire, Sodom and Gomorrah,
Abhorred and obscure names yet in my ears,
As in my sight the sullen fiery worms
That wrapped them strangling then . . . *Turn, turn thine eyes!*
And yet she stood, and stands, hoar Pillar of Salt.

And now two figures climbed Moriah's steep,
A young lad bearing wood; and an old man fire

With a bright knife at his thigh, who mournfully
Upon the topmost mound heaved a new mound,
With shaking purpled hands and eyes that filled.
He laid the wood there, bound
And laid the startled boy there, and uplifted
The knife—already bloody in my eyes
Ere plunged—until a Voice shook from above,
A dreadful Eye hung in the middle of heaven
Pouring sharp rays upon the tawny Mount.
A dreadful Eye, pursuing sleep and dreams
And waking thought,
From cloudless azure casting golden arrows
Into every hole and noisome nook of fear,
Fire-lidded eye, fire-brow'd. 'Twas not the Voice,
It was the Eye that sank Abraham down
With another horror than the sacrifice,
And Isaac prone upon the waiting pyre
Burned by that Eye of fire.

Whose that tall shape and shining sallow front,
Beaked nose, black brush-like hair and hawk-like eyes,
Lean callous figure by the river's waste
Or desert waste casting his shadow on
Myriad slaves? And what the dreadful cloud,
Darkening and humming death, infinite hordes,
Dusking Imperial Egypt's self with fear?
Horde after horde, hosts of that angered God
Whose smoky fire burned through the locust rivers,
These like another fire ate substance up
And left white famine in a desert of bones.
Saw Pharaoh this dark cloud, and snuffed that fire
Of famine?
—Now Elijah's ravens
Flying to the brook to drink, beheld him prone,
And dropped, as grim Jehovah bade, foul meats
For the sad prophet's need,

Who in the loneliness of loneliness
Raised fleshless arms to plead
For death, or the Lord's judgment on his foes.
The ravens dropping offal, craking death,
Black missive wings between starved earth and hell,
Black wings that rose,
Circled and fell,

Gave place and rose no more.
Jordan's pale shallow stream it was and on the shore
Tumult of wondering tongues; no ravens now,
A dove between John and Jesus fluttering,
Neck-ringed with black, and nimbus'd with pale flame,
And tipt with sapphire flame the light-like wing,
And treading fire when o'er the twain she hung
Between the fierce face and the patient brow
Of John and Jesus as they stood and parted.
—And then the raven wings, and notes
Returned of desert throats.

* * * * * *

Maybe the wind was slaked awhile and slept,
Or I slept though it raved; but as I turned
The vixen East barked out anew and brought
Voices again that muttered in childish sleep
When sleep was innocent.
Beneath a white Tower lay the tissued corpse
Yet gleaming and yet warm with running blood.
The city curs crept out and smelt the blood
Oozing upon the supple golden tissue,
Less supple than the breast and thighs beneath.
Their yelping called new yelping and the dogs
Of that dense kennel sprang and wrangled together,
Their muzzles bloodied with the Queen's warm veins
While others stood and snarled, "Behold the Queen,"
And one leaned evil from the Tower and snarled,
"So ends Queen Jezebel, blessed be the Lord!"

His sharp teeth gleaming like the writhing curs'
That licked the blood and dust that late was hers.

The blood and dust. I saw the dust curl up
Chasing the bronz'd wheels of the car that drew
The corse of Hector soiled in the dust of Troy;
Moody Achilles frowning as he threw
His armour down like a discarded toy.

And there Prince Absalom, murdered yet beloved,
Hanging from the fatal tree,
His long hair caught amid the ravaged boughs
Of the sere festering wood,
And gray-winged shafts amid his careless breast,
Under the Judas tree.

And other ghosts I saw—
King David casting dust upon his head,
And Sheba's satraps decked on camel towers,
And weary Solomon, wise and cold,
Nodding on a throne of gold;
Cæsar's chill craft lined in his hueless smile,
Great-helmed Antony clamouring on Egypt's sands
Beside the ageless Pyramids and old Nile . . .
Image with image self-confused confusing,
And in the wind's rage all old fears reviving,
Terrors that startled childhood, quick and numbing,
Again, the haunting drumming;
And O, again, as once, again thy breast,
Mother, that rocked my heart to rest;
Though when I woke and knew that not again
Thy breast would still me, sharper yet my pain.

Baxter Print

Against a tree that might be any tree,
Mid leaves of every season, sits a lady
In silk and velvet, with equable soft eyes.
Her hair is like a shell smooth with the sea,
Her face is porcelain; and in that shady
Green stirless bower she sits, beyond surprise,
And in her lap an unread letter lies.

Is it that colour makes the loveliness?
Is it that never-recoverable serene?
Is it the fingers lying gently laced?
Is it the mingling light and shadowiness
That draws my eyes, the ever-living green
That draws my heart?—Never to be embraced,
Maybe, by warm soft hands her hidden waist.

Love loves not reasons, and I know not why
I love her; maybe but because she is mine,
Or because first on her my questions fell
As I peered at her with a childish eye,
And hers looked down at me with tranquil shine,
While I thought of the letter that might well—
If she dare read it—all her story tell.

Unconquerable

Homer and Milton blind, Beethoven deaf,
And Collins mad and Savage famishing,
And Marlowe huddled into a forgotten grave,
And Chatterton—and sorrows everywhere
Loading the witless air:

Calamity and Death hunt the same wood,
One strikes if other misses; neither rests,

Making of Eden daily desolation,
A bloody amphitheatre of Earth,
Cinders of April turf.

The enemies of Poetry, the fierce thieves
Of beauty's and creation's miracle,
Twin Cæsars ravaging their captived Kingdoms,
For envy slaying what else lives undecaying,
Or maiming without slaying . . .

If there were worser ills than Death to dream of,
Worse pangs than hunger's and the numbèd sense,
If even the long foul solitude of the grave
Ended not other griefs of other men,
And other fears; even then

Poetry needs must breathe through lips of man
Desperate defiance and immortal courage,
Needs must hope bicker in his burning eye,
And Death and hunger, madness and despite,
Sink sullenly from sight.

Last Lines[1]

When I look out I see the fair
Counterpart of a happy dream:
Green rollers hissing on broad sands,
Willows o'erwaving a still stream.

When I look in—how dense and foul
The waters of my angry flood,
With fevers clinging to furred boughs
And ancient serpents in my blood!

[1] This is the last poem John Freeman wrote. It was written on August 1, 1929, after a walk in Norfolk. He died on September 23, not having polished it.

O bitter mock of this and that!
How should I with a simple gaze
Meet this enchantment of pure sense
Unhaunted by sick yesterdays?

How look with single joy upon
The leaping hounds' eternal flight—
The long downs leaping with the waves,
The vexed waves barking through the night;

How should not all be gloomed and wronged
By images of fear and ill;
Echo fall menacing on my ear,
And muted shame unfix my will?

Age, with unabating passions,
Narrows upon me; yet I cry
Unending for youth's fresh devices
That lit my past and made this "I."

Is it the petty scourge of thought,
This malady of small regrets,
Misfeatures all I dream upon
And mars the joy that sight begets?

How great the puny Ego swells
In the distinction of remorse!
Shadows grotesquely darken over,
Clear eyes grow dim, pure voices coarse.

O folly! self-forgetting is sole bliss,
Self-idolism the steepest hell,
Like the East Wind that seres the earth,
Self dries up every human well.

Look farther—Down the lane there swings
A young bull, prince-like mid his thralls;
Deep-breasted, mountain-thewed, serene
As Hector pacing Troy's proud walls.

The lowlier herd sways slowly after,
Milk-laden; now the last step dies.
The heat breathes heavy, lingering, while
Shrill martins strip the orchard skies.

And still beyond, remotely clear,
The green hounds in long, lovely motion
Follow the cloudy deer, and stretch
Their supple thighs towards the sleek ocean.

ROBERT FROST

The Rose Family

The rose is a rose
And was always a rose,
But the theory now goes
That the apple's a rose
And the pear is, and so's
The plum I suppose.
The dear only knows
What will next prove a rose.
You of course are a rose—
But were always a rose.

To E. T.

I slumbered with your poems on my breast
Spread open as I dropped them half-read through
Like dove wings on a figure on a tomb
To see if, in a dream, they brought of you.

I might not have the chance I missed in life
Through some delay, and call you to your face
First soldier, and then poet, and then both,
Who died a soldier-poet of your race.

I meant, you meant, that nothing should remain
Unsaid between us, brother, and this remained—
And one thing more that was not then to say;
The Victory for what it lost and gained.

You went to meet the shell's embrace of fire
On Vimy Ridge; and when you fell that day
The war seemed over more for you than me,
But now for me than you—the other way.

How over, though, for even me who knew
The foe thrust back unsafe beyond the Rhine,
If I was not to speak of it to you
And see you pleased once more with words of mine?

The Need of Being Versed in Country Things

The house had gone to bring again
To the midnight sky a sunset glow.
Now the chimney was all of the house that stood
Like a pistil after the petals go.

The barn opposed across the way,
That would have joined the house in flame
Had it been the will of the wind, was left
To bear forsaken the place's name.

No more it opened with all one end
For teams that came by the stony road
To drum on the floor with scurrying hoofs
And brush the mow with the summer load.

The birds that came to it through the air
At broken windows flew out and in,
Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh
From too much dwelling on what has been.

Yet for them the lilac renewed its leaf,
And the aged elm, though touched with fire;
And the dry pump flung up an awkward arm;
And the fence post carried a strand of wire.

For them there was really nothing sad.
  But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,
One had to be versed in country things
  Not to believe the Phœbes wept.

A Favour

The way a crow
  Shook down on me
The dust of snow
  From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
  A change of mood
And saved some part
  Of a day I had rued.

BARRINGTON GATES

Patience

When there's no fiercer fire to light
Than burns of coal, and it is night,
And babes are sleeping overhead,
And quietness with creaking tread
Stops at the door and tries the lock,
And no one talks but Granfer clock
At odds with Time against the wall,
And even Time's trumpets faintlier call—
Then, when all's tranquil but my heart,
I sign that peace with conscious art,
Set my two candles' straitened light
Above the table's polished night,
Take down the Patience pack, and deal
Piles that in gleaming order seal
With law the lawless fount of doubt,
And try to get the Wrangler out.

Now Godhead broods, with whispers terse,
Over a pasteboard Universe.
Steadfast behind his darting eyes
Burns the One Way to Paradise.
And all untouched by Sin and Woe
Under quick hands his creatures go
Complacently from height to height
Unerring, while twin suns their light
Cast on dark mazes of Design,
And at Fulfilment glorious shine,
When Growth and Will for ever stop
With Kings, divinely right, on top.

For there's no Adversary here
But Chance who (demonstrably clear)
Himself is finite, his blind claw
Blunted by mathematic law.
And if his puny power should toil
Successfully to twist the coil,
This is a gem in Godhead's crown:
To cast his whole Creation down
In silent overthrow. For then,
When Kings are dust with common men
And hearts with clubs have been confused
And diamonds with base metal fused,
What's easier than to face the Void
With Will refreshed, Desire uncloyed,
And with old Law (or other new)
Carry the Cosmic Process through?

Old crazy king, you were most wise
To solace your sad glittering eyes
And soothe your restless hands with these
Strange ministers to kingly ease;
And with what witless blind largesse
First carved these gauds, a world to bless!
Cards are such gay fantastic things,
At their cool touch illusion springs,
And spreads a never-hopeless strife
For all who're not too good at life.
Tedious spinsters' faded eyes
Kindle above them gay surmise;
All children love them; old men play
From whom the world has rolled away;
And even youth in doubtful hour
Summons this painted ghost of power.

Abnormal Psychology

I am, they say, a darkling pool
Where huge and cunning lurks a fool
Childish and monstrous, untaught of time,
Still wallowing in primeval slime.
All powerful he with fang and claw
To fill his red capacious maw,
And not a thousand thousand years
Have eased his belly, stilled his fears.
But ever with dim consuming fire
Swirl the slow eddies of desire
About his sprawling limbs, and lull
The torments of his brutish skull.
He is most merciless, lone and proud,
There in the scaly darkness bow'd,
And sleeps, and eats, and lusts, and cries,
And never lives, and never dies.

Nay, but above this stagnant night
The lovely highways of the light
Sweep on with winds and dawning flowers
And stoop to touch its midnight hours.
If I am he, I'm also one
With all that's brave beneath the sun,
With lovers' singing, and tall great trees,
And the white glory of morning seas.
What of this silence, so there stay
Child's laughter to the end of day?
And what of dark, if on the hill
Eve is a burning opal still?

MONK GIBBON

Modernisms

Too many now lament the times grown evil,
See only clouds across the pallid moon,
For all these night-owls hooting fear so often
Give me one cockerel greeting dawn too soon.

To Socrates returned, one stopped, made answer,
"Look in the air, and see those highways strange;
Look in the earth, and see how deep men burrow."
"And the soul?"—"Socrates, souls do not change."

Since all can travel, each returns to show
His boots from Burmah, hat from Tennessee,
His necktie purchased in the booths at Delhi,
And his religion patch-work from all three.

Of nine men met, eight tell me, when I meet them,
War is the one thing they will never swallow.
The fence seems sure, but do not worry, Cæsar,
Once the first sheep has jumped the rest will follow.

Struck with soul-sickness, Modernus has hastened
To Nux, the mind physician, to be whole.
One devil cast, seven entered, he's instructed
That he was wrong and that he has no soul.

Pity that author who in ten years' time
Attempts to win his book a modest sale;
Incest, adultery so well exploited,
There's nothing left to make a brave proud tale.

STELLA GIBBONS

Coverings

I

The snake had shed his brindled skin
To meet the marching feet of spring;
With bar, curve, loop and whirling ring
The patterned swathes, papyrus-thin,
Lay on the cage's sanded floor
Marked with dragging python-spoor.

Flick-flack! Like ash on vulcanite
His eyes and lids in the spatulate
Head were alive with watchful hate,
Daring the sounds and the raw spring light.
He shone like watered silk from his tongue
To his tapering tail where the skin-shreds hung.

The cloudy yellow of mustard flowers
Was barred on his skin with jetty flares
And the five-patched circle the leopard wears:
The sea-shell's convolute green towers
Were called to mind by his belly's hue
That faded to pallid egg-shell blue.

He was covered so to face the sun;
That shadows of leaves might match his skin;
That, where the lily roots begin,
You might not see where the snake begun;
That Man might see, when Snake was dressed,
God in snake made manifest.

2

Mrs. Fand wore a fox round her wrinkled throat;
He was killed at dawn as he snarled his threat
In a bracken-brake where the mist lay wet.
Two men were drowned in a shattered boat
Hunting the whale for the silk-bound shred
That balanced her bust with her henna'd head.

An osprey's plume brushed her fallen chin,
And a lorgnette swung on a platinum chain
To deputise for her sightless brain.
Her high-heeled shoes were of python skin,
Her gloves of the gentle reindeer's hide,
And to make her card-case a lizard died.

She watched the flickering counter-play
As the snake reared up with tongue and eye
Licking the air for newt and fly;
And shook herself as she turned away
With a tolerant movement of her head:
"The nasty, horrid thing!" she said.

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

By the Weir

A scent of Esparto grass—and again I recall
The hour we spent by the weir of the paper-mill
Watching together the curving thunderous fall
Of frothing amber, bemused by the roar until
My mind was as blank as the speckless sheets that wound
On the hot steel ironing-rollers perpetually turning
In the humming dark rooms of the mill: all sense and discerning
By the stunning and dazzling oblivion of hill-waters drowned.

And my heart was empty of memory and hope and desire
Till, rousing, I looked afresh on your face as you gazed—
Behind you an old gnarled fruit-tree in one still fire
Of innumerable flame in the sun of October blazed,
Scarlet and gold that the first white frost would spill
With eddying flicker and patter of dead leaves falling—
I looked on your face, as an outcast from Eden recalling
A vision of Eve as she dallied, bewildered and still,

By the serpent-encircled tree of knowledge that flamed
With gold and scarlet of good and evil, her eyes
Rapt on the river of life: then bright and untamed
By the labour and sorrow and fear of a world that dies
Your ignorant eyes looked up into mine, and I knew
That never our hearts should be one till your young lips had
tasted

The core of the bitter-sweet fruit, and wise and toil-wasted
You should stand at my shoulder an outcast from Eden too.

HELEN GRANVILLE-BARKER

Return

When I returned to Sevilla,
The only hands that were proffered
Were those of the church door beggars,
Held out for the alms I offered.

But when I cried out to Sevilla:
Your heart to my heart has grown colder,
A rose was let fall in my pathway
And a dove flew down to my shoulder.

ROBERT GRAVES

From Our Ghostly Enemy

The fire was already white ash
  When the lamp went out
And the clock at that signal stopped:
The man in the chair held his breath
  As if Death were about.

The Moon shone bright as a lily
  On his books outspread.
He could read in that lily light:
"When you have endured your fill,
  Kill!" the book read.

The print being small for his eyes,
  To ease their strain
A hasty candle he lit,
Keeping the page with his thumb.
  "Come, those words again!"

But the book he held in his hand
  And the page he held
Spelt prayers for the sick and needy.
"By God, they are wanted here,"
  With fear his heart swelled.

"I know of an attic ghost,
  Of a cellar ghost,
And of one that stalks in the meadows
But here's the spirit I dread,"
  He said, "the most.

"Who without voice or body
  Distresses me much,
Twists the ill to holy, holy to ill,
Confuses me, out of reach
  Of speech or touch.

"Who works by moon or by noon,
  Threatening my life.
I am sick and needy indeed."
He then went filled with despairs
  Upstairs to his wife.

He told her these things, adding
  "This morning alone
Writing, I felt for a match-box:
It rose up into my hand
  Understand, on its own.

"In the garden yesterday
  As I walked by the beds,
With the tail of my eye I caught
'Death within twelve hours'
Written in flowers' heads."

She answered him, simple advice
  But new, he thought, and true.
"Husband, of this be sure
That whom you fear the most,
  This ghost, fears you.

"Speak to the ghost and tell him
  'Whoever you be,
Ghost, my anguish equals yours;
Let our cruelties therefore end.
  Your friend let me be.'"

He spoke, and the ghost, who knew not
How he plagued that man,
Ceased, and the lamp was lit again,
And the dumb clock ticked again.
And the reign of peace began.

A Lover Since Childhood

Tangled in thought am I,
Stumble in speech do I?
Do I blunder and blush for the reason why?
Wander aloof do I,
Lean over gates and sigh,
Making friends with the bee and the butterfly?

If thus and thus I do,
Dazed by the thought of you,
Walking my sorrowful way in the early dew,
My heart cut through and through
In this despair of you,
Starved for a word or a look will my hope renew,

Give then a thought for me
Walking so miserably,
Wanting relief in the friendship of flower or tree,
Do but remember, we
Once could in love agree,
Swallow your pride, let us be as we used to be.

The Cool Web

Children are dumb to say how hot the sun is,
How hot the scent is of the summer rose,
How dreadful the black wastes of evening sky,
How dreadful the tall soldiers drumming by.

But we have speech, that cools the hottest sun,
And speech, that dulls the hottest rose's scent.
We spell away the overhanging night,
We spell away the soldiers and the fright.

There's a cool web of language winds us in
Retreat from too much gladness, too much fear:
We grow sea-green at last and coldly die
In brininess and volubility.

But if we let our tongues lose self-possession
Throwing off language and its wateriness
Before our death, instead of when death comes,
Facing the brightness of the children's day,
Facing the rose, the dark sky and the drums,
We shall go mad no doubt and die that way.

ALEXANDER GRAY

Nocturne

Night; the unwelcome sound of rain;
  Streets storm-swept, bleak and bare;
And through the blurred and streaming pane
  An unknown city's glare.

Here have I no remembrancer:
  I have no heart to see
These streets which were so dear to her
  And are so strange to me.

IVOR GURNEY

Tobacco

When tobacco came, when Raleigh first did bring
The herb unfabled, the plant of peace, the king
Of comfort bringers, then indeed new hope
Came to the host of poets with new scope,
New range of power, since one henceforth might sit
Till midnight and still further, and the war of wit
More kindly and warm coloured till dawn came in
And pierced the crevices with daylight thin.
Raleigh he knew, but could not the impossible
Terror of flying steel and bronze foretell
Hurtle, scream and impact of to-day's missile,
Nor the imaginary hurt on the body's vessel.
Raleigh he knew by friendly camp-fire, nights round; and took
Company, warmth, wine—grave counsel with careless joke,
But could not guess that Gloucester men would hide
Five cigarettes a day or more inside
Their breast the one thing unsodden, or go supperless
The better next day's tobacco taste to bless—
Wonder at fogs, stars, posts, till headaches came
To keep those five small tubes in number the same.
The Very lights, grasses, sandbags, rifle-touches, mud—
Crampt in uncouth postures men crouched or stood—
For woodbine breakfast or the spilling of blood.
Raleigh, rapier or pistolet who handled,
Could not conceive the great cylinder bundled
Incredibly through air, not the holding off
From imagination the bellow, the blast-cough
Minnie-werfer she had in her cross times,
And what comfort the beloved brown vegetable

Should bring to fear—brave men past soul unable,
Or well had blessed his curling, unmatched fumes
Himself the patron saint of tobacco takers,
Whether on field of battle or in warm-lit rooms.

Encounters

One comes across the strangest things in walks:
Fragments of abbey tithe barns fixed in modern,
With Dutch-sort houses, where the water baulks,
Weired up, and brick-kilns broken among fern;
Old troughs, great stone cisterns priests might have blessed
For mere liking, most worthy mounting-stones;
Black timber in red brick, surprisingly placed
Where hill-stone was looked for; and a manor's bones
Spied in the frame of some wisteria'd house;
And mill-falls and sedge-pools, and Saxon faces;
Stream sources happened upon in unlikely places;
And Roman-looking hills of small degree.
The surprise, the good in dignity of poplars
At a road's end, or the white Cotswold scars—
Sheets spread out spotless against the hazel-tree.

And toothless old men, bubbling over with jokes,
And deadly serious once the speaking finished.
Beauty is less, after all, than strange comical folks,
And the wonder of them never and never can become diminished.

GEORGE ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

The Idol

I

"See," said the artist, while with languid care
He posed before his goddess, "how sublime
The primitive invention was, how bare
Of inessentials! We, in this dead time
Of outworn schools and theories, have need
To go to those first masters for our creed.

"In this rough stone more vision is expressed
Than in your prettiest nudes. This flat-turned thigh,
And this long plane of shoulder and of breast,
For their consummate rightness make me sigh.
How absolute! how abstract! and how fine
A harmony of angle, plane and line!

"Pure art is here, that has no reference
To anything external—does not tie
Itself to apron-strings of moral sense,
Or flatter bourgeois minds with mimicry
Of actual objects, or give weak assent
To fussy vanity or sentiment.

"Of course"—and here his voice took on a tone
Of deprecating softness—"there are few
Who can love Art for her own sake alone:
It needs the single aim, the vision new,
Irrelevant human motives to reject,
And worship her with the pure intellect."

II

I heard his homily and did not speak,
  But from his idol's grim archaic smile
Fancied her granite tongue was in her cheek
  Mocking her priest with unsuspected guile,
Remembering with what worship she was fed
When knives flashed, and her altar-stones ran red:

When to that rigid and half-moulded shape
  Of inhumanity—her curveless breast,
Her taut half-separate limbs, her mouth agape
  In hard grimace—were offered up the best
Of growing life, the bodies dark-skinned, smooth,
Supple and trembling-swift of eager youth.

Above the chant of the priest, the beat of the drum,
  The clamour of the multitude, the scream
Of writhing victims, cold, impassive, dumb,
  Bloodless she stood, insatiate, supreme—
The crowned Idea of Vengeance, first elect
Terrible sovereign of man's intellect.

Tugs

At noon three English dowagers ride
Stiff of neck and dignified,
Margaret, *Maud* and *Mary Blake*,
With servile barges in their wake:
But silhouetted at mid night,
Darkly, by green and crimson light,
Three Nubian queens pass down the Thames
Statelily with flashing gems.

Fog

Ten paces round me solid earth stretches,
  Moving as I move through impalpable regions
Of space unbounded, unreal, untenanted,
Or tenanted, if tenanted, by powerless anatomies,
  Unbreathing hosts, phantom legions.

Ochreous lights hang, stars of an underworld,
  In the bronze vapour. Unsupported branches
Trail a thin tapestry. Softly, a footfall!
Passes a shadow, a tall shadow—what memory,
  As of a fierce dream, her face blanches?

So to Æneas, moving obscurely
  Through the dim groves and Avernian meadows,
So may have shone the white face of Dido,
Silently scorning him, scorning his entreaties—
  Then fled away through crowding shadows.

Walls

Where a stone path between high walls
Rings each day to my dull footfalls,
A vine with overhanging spray
Close-bordering gardens does betray.
So likewise treads my walled-in thought
Dull ways of habit, guessing nought
Of how the curves go close along
To Beauty's wine and light and song.

THOMAS HARDY

Waiting Both

A star looks down at me,
And says: "Here I and you
Stand, each in our degree:
What do you mean to do—
  Mean to do?"

I say: "For all I know,
Wait, and let Time go by,
Till my change come."—"Just so,"
The star says: "So mean I—
  So mean I."

On the Portrait of a Woman About to be Hanged

Fair and capable one of our race,
Posing there in your gown of grace,
  Plain yet becoming;
    Could subtlest breast
    Ever have guessed
What was behind that innocent face,
  Drumming, drumming!

Would that your Causer, ere knoll your knell
For this riot of passion, might deign to tell
  Why, since It made you
    Good in the germ,
    It sent a worm
To madden Its handiwork, when It might well
  Not have assayed you,

Not have implanted, to your deep rue,
The Clytæmnestra spirit in you,
And with purblind vision
Sowed a tare
In a garden fair,
And a thing of symmetry to the view
Brought to derision!

6th January 1923.

Voices from Things Growing

These flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,
Sir or Madam,
A little girl here sepultured.
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird
Above the bents, as now I wave
In daisy shapes above my grave,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily.

—I am one Bachelor Bowring, "Gent,"
Sir or Madam;
In shingled oak my bones were pent;
Hence more than a hundred years I spent
In my growth of change from a coffin-thrall
To a dancer in green as leaves on a wall,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily.

—I, these berries of juice and gloss,
Sir or Madam,
Am clean forgotten as Thomas Voss;
Thin-urned, I have burrowed away from the moss
That covers my sod, and have entered this yew,
And turned to clusters ruddy of view,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily.

—The Lady Gertrude, proud, high-bred,
Sir or Madam,
Am I—this laurel that shades your head;
Into its veins I have stilly sped,
And made them of me; and my leaves now shine,
As did my satins superfine,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily.

—I, who as innocent withwind climb,
Sir or Madam,
Am one Bet Greensleeves, in olden time
Kissed by men from many a clime,
Beneath sun, stars, in blaze, in breeze,
As now by glow-worms and by bees,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily.

—I'm old Squire Audley Grey, who grew,
Sir or Madam,
Aweary of life, and in scorn withdrew;
Till anon I clambered up anew
As ivy-green, when my ache was stayed,
And in that attire I have long time gayed
All day cheerily,
All night eerily.

—And so they breathe, these growths, to each
Sir or Madam
Who lingers there, and their lively speech
Affords an interpreter much to teach,
As their murmurous accents seem to come
Thence hither around in a radiant hum,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily.

The Woman I Met

A stranger, I threaded sunken-hearted
A lamp-lit crowd;
And anon there passed me a soul departed,
Who mutely bowed.
In my far-off youthful years I had met her,
Full-pulsed; but now, no more life's debtor,
Onward she slid
In a shroud that furs half-hid.

"Why do you trouble me, dead woman,
Trouble me:
You whom I knew when warm and human?
—How it be
That you quitted earth and are yet upon it
Is, to any who ponder on it,
Past being read!"
"Still, it is so," she said.

"These were my haunts in my olden sprightly
Hours of breath;
Here I went tempting frail youth nightly
To their death;
But you deemed me chaste—me, a tinselled sinner!
How thought you one with pureness in her
Could pace this street
Eyeing some man to greet?

"Well, your very simplicity made me love you
'Mid such town dross,
Till I set not Heaven itself above you,
Who grew my Cross;
For you'd only nod, despite how I sighed for you;
Yea, tortured me, who fain would have died for you!
—What I suffered then
Would have paid for the sins of ten!

"Thus went the days. I feared you despised me
To fling me a nod
Each time, no more: till love chastised me
As with a rod
That a fresh bland boy of no assurance
Should fire me with passion beyond endurance,
While others all
I hated, and loathed their call.

"I said: 'It is his mother's spirit
Hovering around
To shield him, maybe!' I used to fear it,
As still I found
My beauty left no least impression,
And remnants of pride withheld confession
Of my true trade
By speaking; so I delayed.

"I said: 'Perhaps with a costly flower
He'll be beguiled.'
I held it, in passing you one late hour,
To your face: you smiled,
Keeping step with the throng; though you did not see there
A single one that rivalled me there! . . .
Well, it's all past.
I died in the Lock at last."

So walked the dead and I together
The quick among,
Elbowing our kind of every feather
Slowly and long;
Yea, long and slowly. That a phantom should stalk there
With me seemed nothing strange, and talk there
That winter night
By flaming jets of light.

She showed me Juans who feared their call-time,
Guessing their lot;
She showed me her sort that cursed their fall-time,
And that did not.
Till suddenly murmured she: "Now tell me,
Why asked you never, ere death befell me,
To have my love,
Much as I dreamt thereof?"

I could not answer. And she, well weeting
All in my heart,
Said: "God your guardian kept our fleeting
Forms apart!"
Sighing and drawing her furs around her
Over the shroud that tightly bound her,
With wafts as from clay
She turned and thinned away.

Going and Staying

The moving sun-shapes on the spray,
The sparkles where the brook was flowing,
Pink faces, plightings, moonlit May,
These were the things we wished would stay;
But they were going.

Seasons of blankness as of snow,
The silent bleed of a world decaying,
The moan of multitudes in woe,
These were the things we wished would go;
But they were staying.

A Glimpse from the Train

At nine in the morning there passed a church,
At ten there passed me by the sea,

At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,
At two a forest of oak and birch,
And then, on a platform, she.

Her I could see, though she saw not me:
I queried, "Get out to her—do I dare?"
But I kept my seat in my search for a plea,
And the wheels moved on. O could it but be
That I had alighted there!

KENNETH HARE

The Puritan

The Puritan through Life's sweet garden goes
To pluck the thorn and cast away the rose,
And hopes to please by this peculiar whim,
The God who fashioned it and gave it him.

CECIL HARMSWORTH

The Angler's Legacy

His rod, his creel, his parchment book:
  These were his loved companions then,
What time his single way he took
  Remote from anxious haunts of men.

Mark well his rod: its lissom strength
  Plays to the bidding hand once more,
But who could cast his wondrous length
  And yet so fine as he of yore?

His well-worn book: with reverent care
  The pages turn and, see, how trim
The motley flies are ordered there
  In shining coils as left by him.

These deemed he likeliest when the sun
  At noon rode imminent on high,
And those when earliest hours had run
  Or gathering clouds possessed the sky.

His osier basket! Furnished still
  As he would fish again to-day—
Ah, mourn with me the frustrate will,
  The harmless purpose gone astray!

No more the willowed stream beside,
  With changing art as change the hours,
He lingers now till eventide,
  Half-hid in affluent water-flowers;

No more with laggard step and slow
He wends his homeward way when fades
From field and stream the sunset glow
And ghost-moths fleck the musky shades;

Nor lifts the latch, nor sees within
The cheerful board, nor tells his tale—
What monsters failed he just to win!
How bright the sun, how fierce the gale! . . .

Belike, in some far other sphere,
His tribute paid of praise and song,
He, should'ring now celestial gear,
With good Saint Peter goes along

To net the sapphire sea; or roves,
With joy at heart no words can tell,
At dawn, the amaranthine groves,
The dew-drenched fields of asphodel;

To find at last the crystal brook
And see, with unexpectant thrill,
Old Izaak watch with steadfast look
The endless hours his patient quill.

* * * * *

Doubt not that whereso'er he be
And what his fate he still doth find
In angling joys, tranquillity,
Contentment for the simple mind.

ELEANOR HEBBLETHWAITE

In Westminster Abbey

Forgotten peers in marble, semi-nude,
Loll nymph-clipt, and their bright examples yiel
Old Gladstone still cold-shoulders Beaconsfield
And ponders on his own beatitude.
The other, proffering his back, as rude,
Though all vehement bloods are long congealed,
Stands truculent as if the organ pealed
Complacent confirmation of the feud.

King, poet, proser, player—side by side
With fools their relics rot, and these their curled
Proud images proclaim our patron saints.
But here are windows for the soul that faints,
While the great door upholds, too oft uneyed,
God and His Mother smiling at our world.

ROBERT HERRING

Creditors

One or two have lived and died
  Made the world worth living in.
But to think of them is pride
  Sets the heart above its din.

Not the ones with ringing names—
  They are legends that display
Something raised them o'er the flames
  That, in warming, crack our clay.

But the casual wayfarers
  Who, though little met or known,
Have such gifts and graces theirs
  That our minds become their throne.

By some freedom in the gait,
  Turn of head, or fearlessness,
They, beyond their estimate,
  Blunt the edge of our distress.

By some token in the eye,
  They in all their doing, give;
Make us not forget we die,
  But rejoice that yet we live.

Many such, not beautiful
  (Save in mind—nor wholly there),
Make this life's dark duty full
  For that moment when their hair

Gave point to a pointless crowd,
  Or they spoke, or did not, till
Our hearts rise to cry aloud;
  Cry one moment, then be still.

The Dying Fall

When the music's ended,
  Lady,
Rest you then behind.
We've been one, in music blended:
Let flesh follow mind.

Let flesh follow mind
  Now, lady.
'Twas flesh did convey
Sound to souls and by it my words
In your heart make way.

In your heart make way,
  Grave lady,
Settle logic's debt.
Though our souls alone were ravished
We are mortal yet.

We are mortal . . . yet,
  Live lady,
While flesh is our frame
Love has power to loose its fetters
In consuming flame.

In consuming flame,
  Fast master,
Hell's the place to burn.
Sheep-gut haled us up to heaven;
But to earth we turn.

But to earth we turn,
  Dull lady,
There to be earth-wise.
Even Eve still went with Adam,
Leaving Paradise.

Leaving Paradise!
  'Las, lady—
We must, if we go
From these rooms whose leafy arras
Teach us what they know.

Teach us! What they know,
  Quiet lady,
Surely we may guess?
Have we fallen too low to answer
When our instincts press?

When our instincts press,
  My lady,
Think how sweet will be
Uncasing of the lute to play on't
Our high symphony.

Music rarefies,
  Young master,
Hearts immoderate;
Quintessentialises passions
To a rarer state.

To a rarer state
  Of loving,
Lady, how can we
E'er attain, that scorn the proving
Of such joys as be?

Deep the music throbs
  And rushes,
Rocks the bursting air.
Then finds rest on cheeks as blushes,
Sinks as gold on hair.

Light the candlelight
  Falls on you.
Light your bodice springs
(Needs no Orpheus to draw music,
Lady, from such strings).

While the music runs—
  Quick, lady!—
Urge it through each vein.
Then when we are where are tapers
It will out again.

It will out again,
  (Hey, lady!)
Lifting us above
(As that bird the brier outwarbles)
Our more meagre love.

Our more meagre love,
  Gay lady
(Since we're wise and old),
Needs such trills and titivating
That the charm may hold.

Ah, but music finished,
  Master,
Is of love's own kind:
Both as echoes only sweetly
Sound unto my mind.

As I listened, 'twas my last love,
Master,
Drew my smiles.
My last, not your first, love—master!—
Let you try your wiles.

A City Progress

O, O the sights I see
Stab into the heart of me.

A woman on the kerb a-seat
(All her hearthside in that street),
Mending chairs to bring her food.
And mid the plaiting-straws her brood
Rout it with a single doll:
They are thieves soon, she a troll.

But what games might the thing have led
With legs like other dolls, and head;
What dreams might it not have roused
Were its sawdust stronglier housed?
And how might they the future tell
Were only earth different from hell?

At Christmas once I heard a boy
Bid his mother buy a toy.
"Such," she said, "are not for you.
I've the winter to get through."
But I saw the love that broke
On her eyes as her lips spoke.

O, O the sights I see.
Stab into the heart of me.

Every night old women snore
By Wyndham's and New Theatre door,

Twitching bones and shivering rags
Shuffled and shaken and tied in bags.

What would *they* do
With bodies new
And minds smoothed plain?
Come to this again?

"They are at starvation's brink,"
Whispers kindling charity.
"Work they might, did they not drink";
Reason clutches hold of me.

Men whose best remains a ghost
Die in lives that pay the most
For keeping soul still in its cage;
And men whom nothing can assuage
For missing all that's life in them;

And men with anger rife in them,
Against their fathers, whose blind lust
Handed on this urge to thrust.

Sometimes with averted eye
A coin I drop as I pass by,
Knowing alms have late been found
Economically unsound:
For were they let die, no more
Would the poor dare to be poor.
They must die, and we must live—
Put up then what you would give.
'Tis unfit such men were born.
Yet, with pity, spare your scorn.

For O, O the sights I see
Stab through to the heart of me.

I Say to Myself

Rest, weary brain.
This is the time for sleep.
You may not raise again
The hopes fallen deep,
Too deep,
With power thus overlain
By days that are too steep.

Rest, rest—O leave
This muffled trafficking.
Half now can only grieve,
Half has forgot to sing.
Ah, bring
Poppies to powder eve,
Not rue, not mandrake's sting.

Rest, weary mind.
When world's work is fordone
Turn not again to find
Your own life unbegun,
Nor run,
Thus fettered. Pull the blind
'Gainst that unruly sun.

Rest, for another day
Claims all you have to give.
You trickle strength, this way;
And if
Dreams be your life, how may
You dreamless life forgive?

RICHARD HUGHES

The Singing Furies

The yellow sky grows vivid as the sun;
The sea glittering, and the hills dun.

The stones quiver. Twenty pounds of lead
Fold upon fold, the air enlaps my head.

Both eyes scorch: tongue stiff and bitter.
Flies buzz, but no birds twitter:
Slow bullocks stand with stinging feet,
And naked fishes scarcely stir for heat.

White as smoke,
As jetted steam, dead clouds awoke
And quivered on the Western rim:
And then the singing started: dim
And sibilant as rime-stiff reeds
That whistle as the wind leads.
The North whispered low and sere:
The South answered loud and clear,
And thunder muffled up like drums
Beat, whence the east wind comes.
The heavy sky that could not weep
Is loosened: rain falls steep,
And thirty singing furies ride
To crack the sky from side to side.
They sing, and lash the wet-flanked wind:
Sing, from Col to Hafod Mynd:
Fling their voices half a score
Of miles along the mounded shore:

Whip loud music from each tree,
And roll their pæan out to sea
Where crowded breakers fling and leap,
And strange things throb five fathoms deep.

The sudden tempest roared and died.
The Singing Furies muted ride ,
Down wet and slippery roads to hell:
And silent in their captors' train
Two fishers, storm-caught on the main,
A shepherd, battered with his flocks,
A pit-boy tumbled from the rocks:
A score of back-broke gulls, and hosts
Of shadowy, small, pathetic ghosts
Of mice and leverets caught by flood:
Their beauty shrouded in cold mud.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

September

Spring is past and over these many days,
Spring and summer. The leaves of September droop,
Yellowing and all but dead on the patient trees.
Nor is there any hope in me. I walk
Slowly homeward. Night is as empty and dark
Behind my eyes as it is dark without
And empty round about me and over me.
Spring is past and over these many days;
But, looking up, suddenly I see
Leaves in the upthrown light of a street lamp shine
Clear and luminous, young and so transparent,
They seem but the coloured foam of air, green fire,
No more than the scarce embodied thoughts of leaves;
And it is spring within that circle of light.
Oh, magical brightness!—the old leaves are made new.
In the mind, too, some coloured accident
Of beauty revives and makes all young again.
A chance light meaninglessly shines and it is spring.

SCHUYLER B. JACKSON

Unrest in Love

(For M. E. A.)

Out of the world I come to you, where strife
Is daily intercourse, and the feverous light
Of battle is the guiding-torch of life—
Out of this world I come to you to-night.
And out of seas, ship-wrecking, salt, and grey,
Full of shrill winds, and the wild sea-bird's cry,
Where the waves cease not to rise, falling away,
My love, I come to you; here let me lie.

For neither arms, nor ships tossed by the sea,
Nor age, nor winds, can reach unto your breast;
And I lie on your breast, and dream drowsily
Of love that is a sleep, and turn to my rest.
Yet Love cries out, even as I kiss your lips,
To forge strange armour, and to man new ships.

ELLEN JANSON

Sonnet in a Mirror

Men have looked down into those eyes and seen
Beauty; and that same mouth has suckled deep
The breast of passion and the breast of sleep.
That face has stared at horror, and has been
Itself a holiness inviolate;
Has winced for pity, and been bright with laughter,
And looked upon itself in silence, after
The untrue word, the hope that could not wait.

Strange that it all has left so little trace.
The gaze that meets my own is still the lonely
Marveling quiet of a child; she sees
Only the dream go by her eyelids, only
The dream . . . and all those changing memories
Become but shadows, brushing her rapt face.

FRANK KENDON

Now to the World

Now to the world we'll go, my body and I,
Leaving the comfortable nights and days,
The books where wise old men in wise old ways
Wrote down their thoughts of life in years gone by.

Snap up the switch, and let the darkness down;
Shut the two doors; deliver up the key.
These things pass on to others; but for me
They have grown lifeless—I must seek my own.

Picture and book, most taciturn, most dear;
Hearth where I burned my more ambitious rhymes;
Room where I dreamed of life a thousand times;
Scene of so many a joy and fancied fear,

There is no break in this farewell. I go,
Eager as sailors to the uncharted sea—
To wreck or Eldorado—steadfastly;
Whither, save hence, I do not care nor know.

Here I have laid my little-practised hand
To many a task, as children play, for learning;
Here I have told my closest secrets, burning
With strong affection for some intimate friend.

Here we have laughed, or argued, man with man,
Till the quick double pulse of midnight sounded;
Have mocked at Time and Death, and been confounded
Have spoken glibly of the race we ran.

And here, in silence, as the impatient morning
Hovered behind the elms, I spoke with Sorrow;
Clung to wild prophecies of hope to-morrow;
Prayed to I know not Whom, and met day scorning.

Here it was hard to lose, if only dreams;
And here, where empty walls return my stare,
A strong imagination, passionate, clear,
Opened a window upon love, it seems:

Better than art, by trembling fingers made;
The portrait of a queen without her crown,
A thing alive, with magic looks cast down,
And moving lips, by cunning truth portrayed . . .

Close the two doors. Deliver up the key.
There is no break in this farewell to peace—
No frown or smile to signify release—
Snap up the switch; and let the darkness see!

D. H. LAWRENCE

Snake

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid you would kill him.

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered further,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

EVEREST LEWIN

Sonnet : I Did Not See

I did not see the red rose-petal shed,
I did not hear the cuckoo sing his last,
I did not catch the swallow as he passed,
I did not heed that midsummer was dead.
I did not dream, and nothing could foretell,
What age to youth had whispered as I slept;
I did not know the anguished tears I wept
Were love's last tribute to love's last farewell.

Had I but caught the passing flight of all,
Had I but seen my youth with summer fled,
Had I but known the bitter end of bliss . . .
I might have vanished with the cuckoo's call,
I might have fallen with the roses red,
I might have burned on love's last burning kiss.

". . . *Another Man's Poison*"

Oh! fol-de-rol-ray-do
I dressed in my best,
With the stars in my eyes,
And the moon at my breast,
And the sun in my hair;
While the sheen of my gown
Was of the mist on the bracken
And soft as swan's down.

With a girdle of pebbles
Still wet from the stream,

And for jewels the dewdrops
Which hold the sun's beam.
My necklace a chain
Of forget-me-not sweet,
And two little red roses
For shoes on my feet.

Though I stood close beside him
As near as could be—
Oh! fol-de-rol-ray-do
He did not see me!
And what did I care
Though he did not see me?
With a fol-de-rol-ray-do.

Oh! fol-de-rol-ray-do
I sang him a song
Which is ever too short,
Which is never too long,
Of the robin, the owl,
And the little brown bee,
And the small mole who burrows
As deep as can be

To hide from our sight.
I sang of the crying
Of gulls in the dawn,
I sang of the sighing
Of wind in the corn,
Of sunshine and rain.
And when my song ended
I sang it again!

Oh! fol-de-rol-ray-do,
As a frog I must sing,
For I saw very plain
He was not listening!

And what did I care
He was not listening?
With a fol-de-rol-ray-do.

Tumult

Why is the heart so mad, when curbed might be
To other work than love in our best days
The forces of its splendid lunacy?
If from that fugitive desire our gaze
Should parted be, then we might set our hand
To some high torch whence we could light a fire,
A beacon lifted on a lonely strand.
A strand where ever bitter winds conspire
To wreck the little slender craft, who face
The waves' dark tumult, and in blindness wait
One ray of light across that raging space
For guidance, till the storms of chance abate.
Yet none may stay the plunder of the sea,
And in the heart of man the tides run free.

NICHOLAS VACHEL LINDSAY

I Know All This, When Gipsy Fiddles Cry

Oh, gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Saying: "We tell the fortunes of the nations,
And revel in the deep palm of the world.
The head-line is the road we choose for trade.
The love-line is the lane wherein we camp.
The life-line is the road we wander on.
Mount Venus, Jupiter, and all the rest
Are finger-tips of ranges clasping round
And holding up the Romany's wide sky."

Oh, gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Saying: "We will swap horses till the doom,
And mend the pots and kettles of mankind,
And lend our sons to big-time vaudeville,
Or to the race-track, or the learned world.
But India's Brahma waits within their breasts.
They will return to us with gipsy grins,
And chatter Romany, and shake their curls
And hug the dirtiest babies in the camp.
They will return to the moving pillar of smoke,
The whitest-toothed, the merriest laughers known,
The blackest-haired of all the tribes of men.
What trap can hold such cats? The Romany
Has crossed such delicate palms with lead or gold,
Wheedling in sun and rain, through perilous years,
All coins now look alike. The palm is all.
Our greasy pack of cards is still the book
Most read of men. The heart's librarians,
We tell all lovers what they want to know.

So, out of the famed Chicago Library,
Out of the great Chicago orchestras,
Out of the skyscraper, the Fine Arts Building,
Our sons will come with fiddles and with loot,
Dressed, as of old, like turkey-cocks and zebras,
Like tiger-lilies and chameleons,
Go west with us to California,
Telling the fortunes of the bleeding world,
And kiss the sunset, ere their day is done."

Oh, gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Picking the brains and pockets of mankind,
You will go westward for one half-hour yet.
You will turn eastward in a little while.
You will go back, as men turn to Kentucky,
Land of their fathers, dark and bloody ground.
When all the Jews go home to Syria,
When Chinese cooks go back to Canton, China,
When Japanese photographers return
With their black cameras to Tokio,
And Irish patriots to Donegal,
And Scotch accountants back to Edinburgh,
You will go back to India, whence you came.
When you have reached the borders of your quest,
Homesick at last, by many a devious way,
Winding the wonderlands circuitous,
By foot and horse will trace the long way back!
Fiddling for ocean liners, while the dance
Sweeps through the decks, your brown tribes all will go!
Those east-bound ships will hear your long farewell
On fiddle, piccolo, and flute and timbrel.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.

That hour of their homesickness, I myself
Will turn, will say farewell to Illinois,

To old Kentucky and Virginia,
And go with them to India, whence they came.
For they have heard a singing from the Ganges,
And cries of orioles—from the temple caves—
And Bengal's oldest, humblest villages.
They smell the supper smokes of Amritsar.
Green monkeys cry in Sanskrit to their souls
From lofty bamboo trees of hot Madras.
They think of towns to ease their feverish eyes,
And make them stand and meditate forever,
Domes of astonishment, to heal the mind.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.

What music will be blended with the wind
When gipsy fiddlers, nearing that old land,
Bring tunes from all the world to Brahma's house?
Passing the Indus, winding poisonous forests,
Blowing soft flutes at scandalous temple girls,
Filling the highways with their magpie loot,
What brass from my Chicago will they heap,
What gems from Walla Walla, Omaha,
Will they pile near the Bohdi Tree, and laugh?

They will dance near such temples as best suit them,
Though they will not quite enter, or adore,
Looking on roofs, as poets look on lilies,
Looking at towers, as boys at forest vines,
That leap to tree-tops through the dizzy air.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.

And with the gipsies there will be a king
And a thousand desperadoes just his style,
With all their rags dyed in the blood of roses,
Splashed with the blood of angels, and of demons.
And he will boss them with an awful voice.

And with a red whip he will beat his wife.
He will be wicked on that sacred shore,
And rattle cruel spurs against the rocks,
And shake Calcutta's walls with circus bugles.
He will kill Brahmins there, in Kali's name,
And please the thugs, and blood-drunk of the earth.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.

Oh sweating thieves, and hard-boiled scallywags,
That still will boast your pride until the doom,
Smashing every caste rule of the world,
Reaching at last your Hindu goal to smash
The caste rules of old India, and shout:
"Down with the Brahmins, let the Romany reign."

When gipsy girls look deep within my hand
They always speak so tenderly and say
That I am one of those star-crossed to wed
A princess in a forest fairy-tale.
So there will be a tender gipsy princess,
My Juliet, shining through this clan.
And I would sing you of her beauty now.
And I will fight with knives the gipsy man
Who tries to steal her wild young heart away.
And I will kiss her in the waterfalls,
And at the rainbow's end, and in the incense
That curls about the feet of sleeping gods,
And sing with her in canebrakes and in ricefields,
In Romany, eternal Romany.
We will sow secret herbs, and plant old roses,
And fumble through dark snaky palaces,
Stable our ponies in the Taj Mahal,
And sleep outdoors ourselves.
In her strange fairy mill-wheel eyes will wait
All windings and unwindings of the highways,

From India, across America—
All windings and unwindings of my fancy,
All windings and unwindings of all souls,
All windings and unwindings of the heavens.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.

We gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Standing upon the white Himalayas,
Will think of far divine Yosemite.
We will heal Hindu hermits there with oil
Brought from California's tall sequoias.
And we will be like gods that heap the thunders,
And start young redwood trees on Time's own mountains.
We will swap horses with the rising moon,
And mend that funny skillet called Orion,
Colour the stars like San Francisco's street-lights,
And paint our sign and signature on high
In planets like a bed of crimson pansies;
While a million fiddles shake all listening hearts,
Crying good fortune to the Universe,
Whispering adventure to the Ganges waves,
And to the spirits, and all winds and gods,
Till mighty Brahma puts his golden palm
Within the gipsy king's great striped tent,
And asks his fortune told by that great love-line
That winds across his palm in splendid flame.

Only the hearthstone of old India
Will end the endless march of gipsy feet.
I will go back to India with them
When they go back to India whence they came.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.

Hamlet

(Remembering how Walker Whiteside played Hamlet in Springfield so often in Chatterton's Old Opera House, thirty years ago)

Horatio took me to the cliff
Upon the edge of things
And said: "Behold a cataract
Of the thrones of old dream kings."
And I saw the thrones falling
From the high stars to the deep:
Red thrones, green thrones,
To everlasting sleep.
I saw thrones falling
From the zenith to the pit:
Crowns of man's mighty moods
And whims of little wit.
And all the birds of Elsinore
Flew round Horatio's head
And crying, said:
"Though all the crowns go down,
Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown."

Oh monarchs muddled, stabbed and lost,
Who have no more to say:
Gone with Cæsar, with the Czar,
And the Kaiser on his way!
But now I see a student-prince
More real than all such kings,
Hamlet, home from Wittenberg,
And every bird sings:
"Though all the crowns go down,
Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown."

Some of the dreams we saw dethroned
Were merely hopes of mine:
One that a child might love me,
And give one leaf for a sign;

One dream I had in babyhood
That my rag-doll was alive;
One that I had in boyhood
That a sparrow, caged, would thrive.
One that I had for years and years
That my church held no disgrace.
One that I had but yesterday:
Faith in Wisdom's face.

Oh royal crowns, falling fast
From the days of boy's delight,
The frost-bright time when first I made
A giant snow-man white.
And the time of my first Christmas tree,
My first Thanksgiving Day,
My first loud Independence dawn
When the cannon blazed away. . . .
Oh high fantastic hours
That died like dog and clown,
Into the awful pit
We saw their crowns go down,
But Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown.

As sages walk with sages
On the proud Socratic way,
Hamlet struts with players
Till the world's last day.
With seeming shameless strollers
He swaggers his black cloak,
With a prince's glittering eye
He spoils the townsmen's joke.
As I watch him and attend him
He compels them to give room,
And makes Fifth Street our battlement
Against the shades of doom.

With poetry, authority,
With every known pride
Hamlet stands with drawn sword,
His Gipsies at his side.

And all the gardens of the town
Are but Ophelia's flowers,
And all the shades of Elsinore
Fly round our Springfield towers;
And Hamlet kneels by all the hearts
That truly bleed or bloom,
As saints do Stations of the Cross
To Christ's white tomb.
And all the birds keep singing
To my heart bowed down:
"Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown."

ERIC LINKLATER

The Faithless Shepherd

With nice observance of the rules
And precepts of the pastoral schools,
A shepherdess, as fair as pure,
Beneath a hedgerow sat demure.
With conscious grace before her feet
Her swain lay faithfully supine,
Essaying neatly to combine
Positions patently discreet
With rustic notions of design.

Hedge-high the wild small roses grew
To kiss the breeze, and yet there blew
In Phœbe's cheek a wilder rose
That Corin watered with his woes.

Of sighs and chosen words he twined
A cunning thread to trap and bind
The bird that sang in Phœbe's heart;
With careful hand he spread the lime,
The tuneful tears, the weary rhyme,
Of tattered, patched Italian art,
And tirelessly reset the snare
Of piping music's gusty ware.

Yet loving he observed the rules
Laid down for use in pastoral schools,
And all advantages eschewed
Of Phœbe's solitude.

And still in spite of poetry
And this too subtle courtesy,
She tarried coldly continent;
No signal of surrender flamed,
Though orthodoxy clearly claimed
A maidenly consent.

There stood in shade of friendly grass
A jug with sweet cool wine a-brim,
And, weary of his Lover's Mass,
Tall Corin took the sacrament
A readier chalice offered him.
The honest wine first cooled his head,
And led back laughter, that had fled
The solemn ritual of love.
And in a little while
The countryside, that once had been
A placidly enamelled screen,
He saw as mile on waving mile
Of grass that grew more richly green,
Of flowers, and jolly rotund hills,
Of deeply chuckling meadow-rills,
And marching roads; while far above
The portly clouds that statelily
Had stalked across the level sky,
Were tripped and tumbled by the wind
In coltish merriment.

Till, peering through the wine, half-blind
And swimming up in slow ascent,
The bottom of the honest jug
Appears like Truth, all soft and snug
And pinkly naked in her well.

Then Corin laughs. His glances dwell
Once more on Phœbe, and he sees
The wild-rose flaming in her cheek.

And now no more on pilgrim knees
He pleads a docile love and meek,
But boldly clips her in his arms
And quiets her modest faint alarms
With kiss on eager kiss that sips
The rose-red nectar of her lips.
And now his love grows kind to feel
The soft white arms that slowly steal
About his neck. Now Phœbe's kisses,
Each one Love's virgin young Ulysses,
In turn seek rest on Corin's lips. . . .

A vagrant cloud for mockery
Slid solemnly athwart the sun,
And in the leaves, half-breathlessly,
A tiny breeze hid shivering.
Hedge-high the wild small roses flare,
Whose petals, gravely curtseying,
Blow softly down on Phœbe's hair. . . .

And still the bottom of the jug,
With innocent, unwinking eye,
Stared nakedly into the sky.

F. L. LUCAS

The Log

The night grew late; in quiet the room lay waiting,
  Faint clicked the dying embers in their fall,
    Faintly the curtains stirred.
Then, 'mid the hush a key's sharp grating,
  A sudden gust that shook the hall,
    The cry of a wakened bird,
A light, a rustle of silk, quick steps on stone—
Back from the dance at last she came bright-eyed, alone.

She came, she knelt beside the fire that dwindled,
  Once more she made its pallid embers glow,
    Till the flame, upflickering,
Gleamed on a log that lay unkindled,
  Where summers forgotten long ago
    Had circled ring on ring:
Dreaming, she saw again her childhood's tree,
Green in the windy orchard, as it used to be.

She could read her life between these rings she fingered—
  There was last summer's, broad with weeks of rain,
    And next (how near it lay!)
Another ring where her counting lingered,
  The year of a marriage made in vain
    And a face that looked away:
Less, ever less their narrowing circles grew,
Backward and ever back she dreamed her girlhood through.

Like lines upon a hand they lay before her,
  On a dead hand whose destinies are done;

Or some old palimpsest
Whose secret nothing could restore her;
Or a web the spider Time had spun
To snare what she loved best;
Or rounded ripples on a windless sea,
Where life had dropt in the stillness of eternity.

Slowly the grey dawn broke; the room grew colder;
But still she sat and watched the embers die,
Like one who sees his death:
So, when summer scarce seems older,
In the full flush of late July,
Some dawn there comes a breath,
A whisper in the air, along the grass,
That the days draw on towards autumn and shorten as they pass.

SYLVIA LYND

A Fine Night in Winter

This night of sweetly perfumed air
Should not have fallen to December's share,
This is such perfume as young April breathes
When violet-girdled Spring her garland wreathes,
When wallflowers crowd the borders, and in the sun
Hyacinth bells are opening one by one,
And tulip buds are red-stained at the tips,
And pear-trees are like full-rigged sailing-ships—
In such a place, on such a day stood I,
And watched fine weather walking in the sky,
Through pearly clouds threaded the azure day
And winter seemed a thousand years away.

Here are no flowers, and overhead I see
A quick star leaping in a leafless tree—
Not to December's iron share
This night of perfumed air!

FRANCIS CHARLES MACDONALD

At the End of Term

I have given so much I could not well give more,
And they have taken as each one well could take;
Their footmarks are still dust upon my floor.
The echoes of their voices are still awake;
Out of dim corners their eyes are watching still,
Searching my soul, and judging of me thereby—
A thing of good—a fool—a tool of ill—
As what they find seems truth or all a lie.
I have given them much—too much; for it was all
I am or could be. If it nothing seem,
Then it is nothing, and beyond recall;
And what it was I gave they do not dream.
For in my soul, of their bright souls bereft,
Save for their memories now, nothing is left!

For the Dead who died Young

I am glad for the dead
  Who died before spring
Had learned to bring grief
With the budding leaf
  And the new-fledged wing;

For eyes that have seen
  The heavens' full arc
Span worlds of delight,
And are shut to-night
  In the mouldy dark;

For ears that have heard
  The eternal breath
Blow spring to the shore,
And can hear no more,
  Being stuffed with death.

For hearts that have known
  Young love, and the sweet
Desires, and the pain,
And never again
  Shall tremble and beat:

For these I rejoice—
  I mourn not. O, fair
Were their days, though brief:
Before life was grief,
  And April despair.

H. S. MACKINTOSH

"Il Est Cocu—le Chef de Gare"

The Teuton sang the "Wacht am Rhein"
And "Lieber Augustin," while we
Had "Long, long Trail" and "Clementine"
And "Old Kit Bag" (to give but three);
Good songs, and yet, you must agree,
The poilu's theme was richer, vaster,
—Double-distilled felicity!—
"He has been duped—the station-master!"

A joyous thought, an anodyne
For gelignite and T.N.T.:
A song to cure those saturnine
Red singing-men of Battersea;
And, whosoever wrote it, he
Deserves a tomb of alabaster
Graven on which these words should be:
"He has been duped—the station-master!"

When I am tired of Gertrude Stein
("She said she said that she said she . . ."!),
When the expressionistic line
Has palled, and Sitwells weary me,
When bored with psycho-prosody,
Obscurist and grammaticaster
Give me that song of Picardy:
"He has been duped—the station-master!"

Prince, did you hear the soldiery
Singing of that obscure disaster—
(Zenith of Gallic pleasantry)
"He has been duped—the station-master!"?

LE ROY MACLEOD

Driven

Along the yellow road the brown hogs go
Between the thin woods stained with summer's death—
Waving the little banners of their breath
Above their round backs' undulating flow.

Their ears are blinders and their gaze too low
To see how like a lidless bloodshot eye
Pressed to the frosted pane of morning sky
A sly sun coldly watches where they go.

Their ears are blinders and they only see
The road is freedom, where their feet may go.
They nose the dust, the air, and do not know
The gate is shut and latched that set them free.

The road spreads on; the poles hum overhead.
The brown hogs snuff their way and do not know
The leaf-stained roadside brook that does not flow
Is no more cold than warm blood quieted.

But no such happy ignorance is given
To us who put our feet upon their tracks!
We know too well how there behind our backs
A gate is shut and we are also driven.

EDWARD MARJORIBANKS

A House of Dreams

Did I love you with all my heart?
And were you trembling on the brink
Of love, before you turned away
In waywardness and scorn?
In what strange garden shall I say
Bloomed that exotic flower apart,
Our love forgotten and forsworn,
And what fell poison did it drink
That now it droops, all withered and forlorn?

The twilit palace of your soul
I did adorn with radiant things,
That dusky house, where shadows flit
Ghostlike, and cold winds sigh;
And there the lamps of Heaven I lit,
Through empty galleries I stole,
Hearing celestial minstrelsy,
Feeling the brush of angel's wings.
I thought we loved each other, you and I.

There had I lived and died content,
And stayed for ever as your guest,
And made my Eden here with you,
Found Heaven in your eyes.
Now distant ways I must pursue,
And wander, till my strength is spent,
Along the endless road, that lies
Before the pilgrim soul, whose quest
Is always for some farther Paradise.

ALICE MEYNELL

The Poet and his Book

Here are my thoughts, alive within this fold,
My simple sheep. Their shepherd, I grow wise
As dearly, gravely, deeply I behold
Their different eyes.

Oh distant pastures in their blood! Oh streams
From watersheds that fed them for this prison!
Lights from aloft, midsummer suns in dreams,
Set and arisen.

They wander out, but all return anew,
The small ones, to this heart to which they clung;
"And those that are with young," the fruitful few
That are with young.

Time's Reversals

A Daughter's Paradox

To his devoted heart
Who—young—had loved his ageing mate for life,[1]
In late lone years Time gave the elder's part,
Time gave the bridegroom's boast, Time gave a younger wife.

A wilder prank and plot
Time soon will promise, threaten, offering me
Impossible things that Nature suffers not—
A daughter's riper mind, a child's seniority.

[1] Dr. Johnson, dying thirty years later than his wife, who was twenty years his senior, for ten years therefore looked back on a younger wife.

Oh, by my filial tears
Mourned all too young, Father! On this my head
Time yet will force at last the longer years,
Claiming some strange respect for me from you, the dead.

Nay, nay! too new to know
Time's conjuring is, too great to understand.
Memory has not died; it leaves me so—
Leaning a fading brow on your unfaded hand.

The Poet to the Birds

You bid me hold my peace,
Or so I think, you birds; you'll not forgive
My kill-joy song that makes the wild song cease,
Silent or fugitive.

Yon thrush stopt in mid-phrase
At my mere footfall; and a longer note
Took wing and fled afield, and went its ways
Within the blackbird's throat.

Hereditary song,
Illyrian lark and Paduan nightingale,
Is yours, unchangeable the ages long;
Assyria heard your tale;

Therefore you do not die.
But single, local, lonely, mortal, new,
Unlike, and thus like all my race, am I,
Preluding my adieu.

My human song must be
My human thought. Be patient till 'tis done.
I shall not ever hold my peace; for me
There is no peace but one.

T. STURGE MOORE

To Memory

O deeper than the noontide seems when blue,
Conceived as of yet finer woof than air,
Where, as clouds form, folk cherished, moments rare,
Fitfully gleam and pass . . . romance all true,
Yet never real enough, thou wild deceit,
Drug us till we, no longer what wé are,
Love as we loved! . . . Reluming star by star
Night falls and tears with thy far glances meet.

Thou dream of dreams, which most we can retrieve
And least forget, for thee dramatic truth
Drapes in fresh silks the tragedy of youth.
Yet as they act, our eyes, once blind, perceive
Much those performers are too fond to note
Till phantom sobs catch in a shrivelled throat.

R. H. MOTTRAM

The Flower of Battle

The summer twilight gently yields
To star-sown luminous night, and close
The flowers in these Flemish Fields
Are folded, still the leaves repose;

But, as the colour leaves the sky,
And darkness wraps a suffering earth,
Clamouring, climbing endlessly
Another blossom springs to birth:

The Flower of Battle, down the wide
Horizon mantles, tendrils spread,
Its far-hung petals brilliant dyed,
Yellow, and blinding white, and red.

Fed with our bodies at its root,
Fed with our hearts its living flame,
It sways in wonder absolute,
And Flower of Battle is its name. . . .

Men will gaze, awestruck, men will strive
To reach its glowing heart . . . and some
May turn away while yet alive,
But few from out its shade may come!

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

Nobis Cum Pereant

Nobis cum pereant amorum
Et dulcedines et decor,
Tu nostrorum praeteritorum,
Anima mundi, sis memor.

On the mind's lonely hill-top lying
I saw man's life go by like a breath,
And Love that longs to be love undying,
Bowed with fear of the void of death.
"If Time be master," I heard her weeping,
"How shall I save the loves I bore?
They are gone, they are gone beyond my keeping—
Anima mundi, sis memor!

"Soul of the World, thou seest them failing—
Childhood's loveliness, child's delight—
Lost as stars in the daylight paling,
Trodden to earth as flowers in fight.
Surely in these thou hast thy pleasure—
Yea! they are thine and born therefor:
Shall they not be with thy hid treasure?—
Anima mundi, sis memor!

"Only a moment we can fold them
Here in the home whose life they are:
Only a moment more behold them
As in a picture, small and far.
Oh, in the years when even this seeming
Lightens the eyes of Love no more,
Dream them still in thy timeless dreaming,
Anima mundi, sis memor!"

ROBERT NICHOLS

Ishmael

The night you died, the air was full of sighing,
  From jungle passes blew the sickening breeze,
Across the moon a dingy smoke was flying,
  The black palms tossed and tossed the bounding seas,
The warm gusts filled the tent where you were lying
  And swayed the lantern light across your knees,
The crepitant crickets everywhere were crying
  Between the sighs and sudden silences.

Right well you knew, and we, that you were dying
  Self-exiled, self-disgraced, self-overthrown,
You who had spent youth, blood and bone denying
  Blood of your blood, bone of your very bone.
We spoke: you grinned, in iron derision eyeing
  The proffered cup. Then between groan and groan
Forced out your last: "God damn you and your prying
  Why can't you let . . . a bastard . . . die alone?"

The night you died, the air was full of sighing.

Night Rhapsody

(For Florence Lamont)

How beautiful it is to wake at night
When over all there reigns the ultimate spell
Of complete silence, darkness absolute,
To feel the world, tilted on axle-tree,
In slow gyration, with no sensible sound,

Unless to ears of unimagined beings,
Resident incorporeal or stretched
In vigilance of ecstasy among
Ethereal paths and the celestial maze,
The rumour of our onward course now brings
A steady rustle as of some strange ship,
Darkling with soundless sail all set and amply filled
By volume of an ever-constant air,
At fullest night, through seas for ever calm,
Swept lovely and unknown for ever on!

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Embalmed in darkness, watchful, sweet, and still
As is the brain's mood flattered by the swim
Of currents circumvolant in the void,
To lie quite still and to become aware
Of the dim light cast by nocturnal skies
On a dim earth beyond the window-ledge,
To brood apart in calm and joy awhile
Until the spirit sinks and scarcely knows
Whether self is or if self only is
For ever . . .

How beautiful to wake at night
Within the room grown strange and still and sweet
And live a century while in the dark
The dripping wheel of silence slowly turns,
To watch the window open on the night,
A dewy silent deep where nothing stirs,
And, lying thus, to feel dilate within
The press, the conflict and the heavy pulse
Of incommunicable sad ecstasy
Growing until the body seems outstretched
In perfect crucifixion on the arms
Of a cross pointing from last void to void
While the heart dies to a mere midway spark!

All happiness thou holdest, happy night,
For such as lie awake and feel dissolved
The peaceful spice of darkness and the cool
Breath hither blown from th' ethereal flowers
That mist thy fields! O happy, happy wounds,
Conditioned by existence in humanity,
That have such powers to heal them!—slow sweet sighs
Torn from the bosom, silent wails, the birth
Of such long-treasured tears as pain his eyes
Who, waking, hears the divine solicitudes
Of midnight with ineffable purport charged.

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Another night, in darkness yet more still
Save when the myriad leaves on full-fledged boughs,
Filled rather by the perfumes' wandering flood
Than by dispansion of the still sweet air,
Shall from the furthest utter silences
In glimmering secrecy have gathered up
An host of whisperings and scattered sighs
To loose at last a sound as of the plunge
And lapsing seethe of some Pacific wave
Which, risen from the star-thronged outer troughs,
Rolls in to wreath with languorous foam away
The flutter of the golden moths that haunt
The star's one glimmer daggered on wet sands!

So beautiful it is to wake at night
Imagination, loudening with the surf
Of the midsummer wind among the boughs,
Gathers my spirit from the haunts remote
Of faintest silence and the shades of sleep
To bear me on the summit of her wave
Beyond known shores, beyond the mortal edge,
Of thought terrestrial, to hold me poised
Above the frontiers of infinity,

To which in the full reflux of the wave
Come soon I must, bubble of solving foam,
Borne to those other shores—now never mine
Save for an hovering instant, short as this
Which now sustains me, ere I be drawn back,
To learn again, and wholly learn, I trust,
How beautiful it is to wake at night.

The Black Mountains, 1919.

WILFRED OWEN

Asleep

Under his helmet, up against his pack,
After so many days of work and waking
Sleep took him by the brow and laid him back.

There, in the happy no-time of his sleeping,
Death took him by the heart. There heaved a quaking
Of frustrate life, like child within him leaping . . .
Then chest and sleepy arms once more fell slack.

And soon the slow stray blood comes creeping
From the intrusive lead, like ants on track.

* * * * * *

Whether his deeper sleep lie shaded by the shaking
Of great wings, and the thoughts of stars,
High-pillowed on calm pillows of God's making,
Above these clouds, these rains, these sleets of lead,
And these winds' scimitars;
—Or whether yet his thin and sodden head
Confuses more and more with the low mould,
His hair being one with the grey grass
Of finished fields, and wire-scrags rusty-old, . . .
Who knows? Who hopes? Who troubles? Let it pass!
He sleeps. He sleeps less tremulous, less cold
Than we who wake, and waking say, Alas!

KARL PARSONS

Thetis and the Aunts

Three old cats of covert claw
  Sitting round the parlour fire:
What they thought of what they saw
  Made the walls perspire.
In the morning they will waken
(Drear the day and dawn forsaken)
With Rebuke distilled by gallons
And acutely tingling talons.

* * * *

Thetis, only just sixteen,
  Posing to the looking-glass
Doesn't—yet—know she was seen
  ("Nothing on!" "The brazen lass!").

On her left, a candle, warm;
  On her right, a moonray, cold;
Her dim lily-slender form
  Half in silver, half in gold.

Moonray thought: "'Tis Dian, sped
  Before me to receive me home!"
Candle thought: "'Tis Psyche fled
  From Venus and the wrath to come!"

Mirror mused: "My well of Truth
  Brims with an immortal sign:
All of Beauty, all of Youth,
  One eternal moment—mine!"

Old jute carpet felt like tears
  Where her flitting shadow fell,
Where her feet caressed his years:
  "I was young," he thought, "as well."

Old lace curtain held his breath,
  Laying the print of flowers tied
With ribbon, like a bridal wreath,
  Motionless against her side.

Tinsel text above her bed
  Bloomed a rose without a thorn:
"GOD IS LOVE." Its fragrance shed:
  "Christ was of a maiden born."

Tumbled shift across her chair
  Clasped the ghost of warmth, and slept;
Dreamed her guileless bosom there,
  Heard the happy heart that leapt.

Thetis thought (White hip out-thrust,
  Arm upraised, bright cheek on shoulder):
"Rather nice! I hope I'm just
  A shade less skinny when I'm older.

"In two more years I'll be eighteen—
  I shall always bob my hair . . .
I'm pinky where my strings have been—
  I rather like that bit just there. . . .

"Greek girls ran about like this!
  Somewhat awful! All the same
There's a frightful lot we miss—
  Modern life's a bit too tame. . . .

"Fancy Auntie Dot like me!
  Oh! It's hateful growing old—
Grey and deaf and crotchety—
  Dead and buried . . . ugh! I'm cold."

Then she pirouetted, twice;
  Smiled at herself and kissed one arm—
"*Hush!*" She thrilled like fire in ice!
  "Door clicked! . . . Nothing . . . False alarm."

* * * * *

Three old cats of cunning claw
  Sitting round the parlour fire:
What they thought of what they saw
  Turned their whiskers wire.
Thetis, in the morn will waken
(Or I'm very much mistaken)
To a discourse on Divinity
Mewed *crescendo* by the Trinity.

J. D. C. PELLOW

Mortality

I

One July afternoon I had my fill
Of sunshine as I climbed the gradual hill
By the green, winding, secular ways that reach
Through flowery meadows and still groves of beech
From Chalfont up to Penn, and finding there
The church-door standing open, from the glare
Turned in and sat and rested for a while
In the cool, quiet space of the south aisle.
Where presently I found in brass portrayed
With little skill, in shroud and coffin laid,
Some Jacobean dame, perhaps a Penn,
When once she lived a lover and mother of men.
Then, pondering on that strange monument,
My fancy in a far exploring went.
I thought of Donne, who on his deathbed called
For one to paint him in his cerement palled;
Who in his vivid youth could think death fit
To sharpen the bright edge of his brave wit;
And deemed the prime and ripeness of his life
One long rehearsal of the final strife.
I thought then how all hours of that high time
Were filled with the passing-bell's repeated chime,
And fever and plague with frequent-halting feet
Came tapping blindly down each London Street;
And the tombs about me told how many died
Of the many babes that were a mother's pride.
I thought of Hamlet's brooding, Claudio's fear,

The unlit, agonising gloom of Lear;
I thought of Webster's Duchess, and the rage
Of torture and of blood that filled his stage;
Of Browne and Taylor, never more eloquent
Than when their golden-flaming tongues were spent
In a rich meditation and sad praise
Of the brief tale of their uncertain days;
And proud-living Raleigh, paying in knightly sort
Due homage (once a Queen's) in Death's dim court.

II

Yet this was Merry England, the most bright
Hour of the day that now shades down to night;
The dewy hour, that never could be too long,
The hour of unstrained, universal song,
Of laughter, and pride of life, and careless and gay
Feasting and dance in a seeming infinite May.
In such a golden time, I thought, how strange
That fancy in so dark a path should range;
That when the torrent of life so fiercely ran,
Mortality should so haunt the mind of man.

III

I walked into the beechwood then. How sweet
The scent of the red leaves beneath my feet!
Crisp was the last year's falling, but the old
Pressed in how rich and deep and soft a mould!
And out of the mould erect, the noble trees
Rose eagerly to the sun and the upper breeze,
Thrusting their myriad fingering branches there
And leaves that greedily drank the light and air.
Now they were green and supple, still in their prime
And vigour, I thought, but they will wither in time,
And green will turn to brown, and brown to red;
The stalk will loosen till, shrivelled and crisp and dead,

Upon some frosty bright November morn,
Slowly and gently, this and that way borne
In the light airs, gleaming suddenly gold
In a chance ray, they'll fall to the soft mould
And lie there soaked and rotting, winters and springs
Innumerable, corrupt, forgotten things.
Corrupt? Transformed, transmuted, rather say.
Forgotten? Does the night forget the day
It cherishes in obscurity, and renews
With rest and soothing darkness, and cool dews?
So in its dissolution is the leaf
Transmuted and renewed beyond belief.
Its elemental virtues are set free
To seek anew the bondage of the tree,
Wherein the essence deep from earthen wells
Is drawn and filtered through a thousand cells
In blind impulsion till, the beech-rind burst,
It breaks into a leaf again, for light and air athirst.

IV

So the unending flux of the world rolls;
Nor otherwise the cycle of human souls.
The stars and the earth, Time and the World and I
Fade year by year, and daily, hourly die.
Then dark stars blaze again, and cold worlds bloom,
Shedding a new light in the vast gloom,
And through a myriad ages move and burn
And flicker, then once more to darkness turn.
Yet think of this—though all things have an end
Within the flux they all so merge and blend,
That none may set a limit, and say, lo,
This side the dead, on that the living, go,
For being and not being are well-threaded
Strands of one rope, inextricably wedded.
Life is the sunward hemisphere, a line
Or hairlike thread, immeasurably fine

That perilously hangs between the vast
Unborn to come, and no-more-living past.
Now I begin to read my riddle plain:
Life is the bread, and death the planted grain;
The buried seed reviveth in the bread,
And we that break it feed upon the dead.
Yet, blindly and most shamefully afraid,
We loathe the food we live by, and we shade
Our foolish eyes from the aliment of death,
And so grow feeble, bloodless, scant of breath.
But those who dwelt with death, dark hour by hour,
Drew love from hell, from danger, joy and power,
They who so bravely sang, so gaily fought,
Knew well the truth that Epictetus taught—
The cripple-slave, heroic as he was wise—
That he who ever holds before his eyes
The dreadful image of exile and of death
No rank desire or mean thought harboureth.

After London

London Bridge is broken down;
  Green is the grass on Ludgate Hill;
I know a farmer in Camden Town
  Killed a brock by Pentonville.

I have heard my grandam tell
  How some thousand years ago
Houses stretched from Camberwell
  Right to Highbury and Bow.

Down by Shadwell's golden meads
  Tall ships' masts would stand as thick
As the pretty tufted reeds
  That the Wapping children pick.

All the kings from end to end
  Of all the world paid tribute then,
And meekly on their knees would bend
  To the King of the Englishmen.

Thinks I while I dig my plot,
  What if your grandam's tales be true?
Thinks I, 'be they true or not,
  What's the odds to a fool like you?

Thinks I, while I smoke my pipe
  Here beside the tumbling Fleet,
Apples drop when they are ripe,
  And when they drop are they most sweet.

JOHN SWINNERTON PHILLIMORE

Circe and Aeneas

Seagirt, by woods encompassed, eyried within gates
That no man opens—nay, the unuttered *Who goes there?*
Makes the benighted traveller tremble, half-aware
What flocking maleficences mount upon the fume
Of aromatic logs that secret fires consume—
The solitary enchantress broods and meditates,
Leaning out of the window of her turret-room.

The dusk falls. Weary of singing to herself, she waits.
And, hark, the pitiable chorus, brute on brute,
From cage and sty and manger breaking to salute
The hour of love remembered and the nuptial star.
Surely this evening sets the prison doors ajar,
Surely this evening . . . Bestial rage exacerbates
Within their horrible hides the sense of what they are.

Bear, lion, wolf and hog—she hears with a cold smile
The stupid orchestration ebb and sink absorbed
Into the foliage, into the sea-ripple. A moon big-orbed
Illuminates the Tuscan water . . . "Who are these?
And whence the fugitive sail the even southerly breeze
Would spirit away beyond my luring perilous isle?
Who thinks to steal a passage thro' Circean seas?"

She loosed an air of magic melody (all the while
Far out the breath of cedar-logs went floating free).
But the long-waited lover that was not to be

Passed like a pilgrim proof against the sweet decoy,
Primed with Avernian revelation, in grave joy,
Smelling the air of Tiber, every moonlit mile
Nearing his promised walls, the second spring of Troy.

The Screever

There is the screever. Since a north wind blowing
Has left the kerbstone dry to suit his chalks,
He's chosen a pitch where many take their walks,
Knelt to his task and made this mighty showing.

Christ in Gethsemane (with trees and grass)—
Lloyd George—A sunset (Turneresquely daring)—
A shipwreck—Tanks in Cork—A kiltie sparing
A wounded Hun. With hardly a look they pass.

Will no one taste of that which savours sweeter
Than voice of noonday larks to hear, or smell
Drawn after April rain from primrose banks,
Or honeycombs upon the tongue of the eater?
See, there's his cap—your copper, aim it well,
And buy a pennyworth of poor-man's thanks.

FRANK PREWETT

The Red Man in the Settlements

From wilderness remote he breaks
With stealthy springing tread;
The little town a moment takes
A glimpse of times long dead.

He scorns to see the things we own
But sullen stares beyond,
Alone, impassive, cold, unknown;
With us he feels no bond.

One moment flocking with a stare
To see the red man pass,
The townsfolk feel the street's hot glare
And dream of springs and grass.

They see a breathless, dusty town
They had not known before;
The red man in his robes is gone,
The townsfolk toil once more.

And whence he came, and whither fled,
And why, is all unknown;
His ways are strange, his skin is red,
Our ways and skins our own.

J. B. PRIESTLEY

EPIGRAMS

Overheard

Somewhere past Sirius, shade called to shade:
"Well, any gossip? Something new, I trust?"—
"Not much. They say that solar god has made
Some quite amusing things out of his dust."

Consolation for the Unborn

Babes whose births have been controlled,
Weep not but ring your loudest bells,
For the Present is stale, the Past is old,
And the Future belongs to Mr. Wells.

At a Night Club

The young men shouted with the band
And pranced their partners across the floor,
Yet when they had done, I saw them stand
A moment—dubious in Elsinore.

Values

If Goodness and Beauty
Will make it their duty,
Sweet maids, to live with me;
Then Truth can still stay
With Professor A,
Or elope with Professor B.

ALAN PRYCE-JONES

London Siren

I sat at a high window till sleep despaired of me
And all the anger in this small room
Shook me for what I am, and measured out a tomb
For the exact inadequacy that I shall be.
I sat at my high window shrunkenly,
Too tiny for despair, too bored for anger,
Too numbed by the cold night of my mind
To find
Remedy for this languor.

I sat at my high window and the stars were the same
Bright villainous stones as the stars yesterday.
Catherine wheels, said I, are stronger than the Lion,
Lion immature and tame,
And Roman Candles louder, brighter than Orion,
And more beautiful of name.
Even the streets are bent and grey,
With shallow lamps spattering
The thirsty stone beneath,
Guttering and cowed and out of breath,
Building an obvious analogy of Life and Death.

I sat at my high window with a ray for a wreath
And a wind for a shroud.

Over the wall the houses pressed and scattered,
Only the cold bricks were awake;
There was no child that walked, no dog pattered,
There was no scarlet omnibus to shake

The childish light that trembles at my window.
Over the wall, raindrops like sparrows chattered,
And leaped and clattered in the lonely light
That gutters low and stirs to make
A gilt stem for the bright
And shapeless visions of wet streets at night.

I sat at my high window and the houses came
And went in sullen streets, broke into wall and square,
House, light and star, night, soundless path and stair,
Wall and stair, flat houses, ever the same,
And I the same with all that ever was
At this high window, all the truths half-taken,
Thirsts half-appeased, fat tears
Half-shaken
By laughter half-sincere.

Suddenly by the window fell a spear
Of thin metallic sound,
That pricked and scraped against me and made stir
The cumbrous plague that battened all about . . .
A spear came glittering to wound
This life that fumbled half in hand with death,
To put
A stripping, noisy tooth in the usual fur
That hid a tender skin of the world beneath.

Over the wall of red-brown bricks,
Over the road, over the houses, over the road,
Over a thousand houses and a poor scrap of trees,
Came a far siren moving down the oil-lit quays,
Where Thames-water sticks
Thrown up with petrol and tar, to the roped stone everywhere . . .
Came a brittle goad
To prick the sulky anger of my watching there.

My thought rode out to greet
This cavalier intruder,
As the sound dragged and drifted, and cried thinly down the street,
As it meekly fell and bravely flowed I leaned,
And spread out from my window, a figurehead of flesh and silk
Set on a brown brick ship that hears the waves when birds pipe
Till it turns, as a needle, to the sea.
My thought rode out to meet
So strong an intruder,
And played with the dragging drifting sound of the siren doubtfully.

Suppose some blackened band came sweeping up the river,
Raking the long stretches, the low islands, the stone ridges,
Suppose a dun ship skulked like an otter in the sedges,
Or rode superbly through the hundred bridges
That lace the town together. I watched for the fire
On the dark quay-side, I listened for the wide
Gossip of gun and gun . . . the narrow crack
And snap of windows blinded in a burning. Half I saw a black
Tousle of scorched men against the light, merry fire,
Saw the lovely flames that scraped the city dry,
As hornpipe pirates came to land beside the hundred bridges.

And it was quiet, quiet, so quiet again.

Suppose the black night called, and the city answering,
Crept silent to eager ships and furrowed out to find
A clouded rumour of the North, a grave whispered thing;
Or drove by labour with sick sails pining for a wind,
Under the alder banks, by humped root and gritty shallow,
The jaded osier, the spined nettle against grey sallow,
Down to a withered sea: then the streets empty of all
Hold only post and stone, seams of street-light and no voice,
Not a green bird in the window or bird in the hall,
Not a dog with whitened claws and deep clamorous noise

In a shut yard; only the airless cupboards of clothes,
Solitary gown and unlaced shoe in every house
In every street; only the ripple of flown ships,
The vague river-lap, low calls of a beckoning sea.
No wave in a tideless air, no closed eye to arouse
With rattle of cup or morning song of whistling lips,
Only a deserted city, a wet cage for me.

Oh terror, let me take hold of this beloved earth,
Book, china-vase, electric switch, waste-paper, what you will,
Lest I be only a breath, only a terror; still,
So still in nothing, that the waves of air
Break at the window, lap and fall and I be nothing,
Not a rock to catch their breaking, not a grass to hold their sweetness.

Oh terror, there is all the world to confess,
All the universe to travel on a snapped wing,
All the sum of God, ripe as snow or as a yellow pear,
In this strange thought. Let me be still,
Let me take hold on book or vase, electric switch, waste-paper, what you will,
To strengthen me for this beloved earth.

For I know Christ is come. The climbing river
Bears that grave head, those bearded saints, that thunder
Of harp and shield, psalm, creed, and all the dark
Disconsolations we have laid away.
I know that Christ is come and will stay ever,
I know the angry saints will kindle and stay,
Kindled and grey as elms beside a park,
Split by prophetic darts like elms asunder.
Christ at the Tower. Oh, I know, I know,
Christ a gold centaur in the Mall. His saints
Preaching at statue, Admiralty, lake
(White pelicans asleep at dawn). Awake,

Despondent blinds in palaces bestir;
Beneath those golden feet the temples ache.
Doves cry abroad (for I have told them so):
"Christ lies at Knightsbridge." Oh, I know, I know.
"The apples of His words drop fresh and hot,
Ripe, coloured apples, hot as bread and wine."
The twinkling streets are fired like porcelain.
The world's skin pricks like glass beneath the fur.
"See, children, how the saints are broad and fine."
And I am waiting like mysterious Cain
Alone, at this high window which has not
A hope or avenue or new design
Of hiding and escape. "See His grave head,
So tall, so mild, His lips, His hollow palms,
See the swift doves that go to wake the dead."
Oh, words that are as huge and green as farms
That used to roll across the happy land
Before this siren brought a bubble peace.
"Christ is at Kensington." The world is here.
Let me take hold. Let pity make increase
Of hopeless anguish. "Christ is on the stair."

F. REYNOLDS

The Kiss

Once as He stood beside her knee and read,
She drew His lovely head
Close to her breast in mother-sweet embrace.
But as He raised His face
She saw the sudden tears that filled His eyes,
And saddened with surprise.
Why should her little Son be moved like this
At His fair mother's kiss?

The long years passed. Then fell the dolorous tide
Shadowed and prophesied.
John entered trembling to the mother pale
And told the whole sad tale—
The garden scene, and the foul artifice
Of the betrayer's kiss.
And so she understood, that night of woe,
His tears of long ago.

EDGELL RICKWORD

Regret for the Passing of the Entire Scheme of Things

Now in the midst of Summer stay the mind
Whilst flowers hold their stony faces up
And fishes peer through crystal vacancies.

For even in these drowsy hours of ease
Winter's white-armoured horsemen on the hills
Take from the virgin Frost their stirrup-cup.

Whilst now in dusky corners lovers kiss
And goodmen smoke their pipes by tiny gates . . .
These oldest griefs of Summer seem less sad

Than drone of mowers on suburban lawns
And girls' thin laughter, to the ears that hear
The soft rain falling of the failing stars.

R. P. P. ROWE

Religion

Creed wars with creed, each frenzied to convert.
And some bow down to an Almighty Hate,
Fearful for threat of torment ultimate,
Yet none has proof but only can assert.

Assured, some kneel to Hate yet claim their own
The Christ they nail again upon the cross;
While some who love and follow Him to loss
Build their souls' altar to a God unknown.

A Lost Chance

My Life shall be my length of days less one:
  The day I saw her not, yet might have seen,
Shall darken my pale memories of the sun
  When I sink down to Hades and have been.

Not so; for I have counted up the cost
  And dreamed that day into a splendid fate,
A surer Heaven than I can have lost,
  To hold against the truth inviolate.

KENWORTH RUSHBY

The Modern Hippolytus

Not, like poor monks, with fasting and the rod
To mortify the flesh for fear of God:
Not, like Sir Galahad, to run to waste
In sentimental worship of the chaste:
Not, like the Puritan, to hug disgust
And feast on others' sins to quench his lust:
Not, like the saint, with dreams of future bliss,
Lost in a fancied world, this world to miss.
But, like Hippolytus, in pride to make
The body servant for the body's sake;
Spurning the Cytheræan's toils, who craves
With servile heart the passion of her slaves,
Freely to render homage unto Her
Who, being free, desires no worshipper:
To render soul for soul, without pretence,
Not wooing sense through soul, nor soul through sense:
To shun the twilight of the world's mistrust
Where Lust for Love's mistaken, Love for Lust,
And seek Diana's cold and hueless light
That knows no difference save of dark and bright:
There lay the man's will: but the unborn child
Cried in the darkness, and the old world smiled.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

Tuscany

Cisterns and stones; the fig-tree in the wall
Casts down her shadow, ashen as her boughs,
Across the road, across the thick white dust.
Down from the hill the slow white oxen crawl,
Dragging the purple waggon heaped with must,
With scarlet tassels on their milky brows,
Gentle as evening moths. Beneath the yoke
Lounging against the shaft they fitful strain
To draw the waggon on its creaking spoke,
And all the vineyard folk
With staves and shouldered tools surround the wain.
The wooden shovels take the purple stain,
The dusk is heavy with the wine's warm load;
Here the long sense of classic measure cures
The spirit weary of its difficult pain;
Here the old Bacchic piety endures,
Here the sweet legends of the world remain.
Homeric waggons lumbering the road;
Virgilian litanies among the bine;
Pastoral sloth of flocks beneath the pine;
The swineherd watching, propped upon his goad,
Under the chestnut trees the rootling swine—
Who could so stand, and see this evening fall,
This calm of husbandry, this redolent tilth,
This terracing of hills, this vintage wealth,
Without the pagan sanity of blood
Mounting his veins in young and tempered health?
Who could so stand, and watch processional
The vintners, herds, and flocks in dusty train

Wend through the golden evening to regain
The terraced farm and trodden threshing-floor
Where late the flail
Tossed high the maize in scud of gritty ore,
And lies half-buried in the heap of grain—
Who could so watch, and not forget the rack
Of wills worn thin and thought become too frail,
Nor roll the centuries back
And feel the sinews of his soul grow hale,
And know himself for Rome's inheritor?

Bee-Master

I have known honey from the Syrian hills
Stored in cool jars; the wild acacia there
On the rough terrace where the locust shrills
Tosses her spindrift on the ringing air.
Narcissus bares his nectarous perianth
In white and golden tabard to the sun,
And while the workers rob the amaranth
Or scarlet windflower low among the stone,
Intent upon their crops,
The Syrian queens mate in the high hot day
Rapt visionaries of creative fray;
Soaring from fecund ecstasy alone,
And, through the blazing ether, drops
Like a small thunderbolt the vindicated drone.

But this is the bee-master's reckoning
In England. Walk among the hives and hear.

Forget not bees in winter, though they sleep.
For winter's big with summer in her womb,
And when you plant your rose-trees, plant them deep,
Having regard to bushes all aflame,
And see the dusky promise of their bloom

In small red shoots, and let each redolent name—
Tuscany, Crested Cabbage, Cottage Maid—
Load with full June November's dank repose,
See the kind cattle drowsing in the shade,
And hear the bee about his amorous trade
Brown in the gipsy crimson of the rose.

In February, if the days be clear,
The waking bee, still drowsy on the wing,
Will sense the opening of another year
And blunder out to seek another spring.
Crashing through winter sunlight's pallid gold
His clumsiness sets catkins on the willow
Ashake like lambs' tails in the early fold,
Dusting with pollen all his brown and yellow,
But when the rimy afternoon turns cold
And undern squalls buffet the chilly fellow,
He'll seek the hive's warm waxen welcoming
And set about the chambers' classic mould.

And then, pell-mell, his harvest follows swift,
Blossom and borage, lime and balm and clover,
On Downs the thyme, on cliffs the scantling thrift,
Everywhere bees go racing with the hours,
For every bee becomes a drunken lover,
Standing upon his head to sup the flowers,
All over England, from Northumbrian coasts,
To the wild sea-pink blown on Devon rocks.
Over the merry southern gardens, over
The grey-green bean-fields, round the Sussex oasts,
Through the frilled spires of cottage hollyhocks,
Go the big brown fat bees, and blunder in
Where dusty spears of sunlight cleave the barn,
And seek the sun again, and storm the whin,
And in the warm meridian solitude
Hum in the heather round the moorland tarn.

Look, too, when summer hatches out the brood,
In tardy May or early June,
And the young queens are strong in the cocoon,
Watch, if the days be warm,
The flitting of the swarm.
Follow, for if beyond your sight they stray
Your bees are lost, and you must take your way
Homeward disconsolate, but if you be at hand
Then you may take your bees on strangers' land.
Have your skep ready, drowse them with your smoke,
Whether they cluster on the handy bough
Or in the difficult hedge, be nimble now,
For bees are captious folk
And quick to turn against the lubber's touch,
But if you shake them to their wicker hutch
Firmly, and turn towards the hive your skep,
Into the hive the clustered thousands stream,
Mounting the little slatted sloping step,
A ready colony, queen, workers, drones,
Patient to build again the waxen thrones
For younger queens, and all the chambered cells
For lesser brood, and all the immemorial scheme.

And still they labour, though the hand of man
Inscrutable and ravaging descend,
Pillaging in their citadels,
Defeating wantonly their provident plan,
Making a havoc of their patient hoard;
Still start afresh, not knowing to what end,
Not knowing to what ultimate reward,
Or what new ruin of the garnered hive
The senseless god in man will send.
Still their blind stupid industry will strive,
Constructing for destruction pitiably,
That still their unintelligible lord
May reap his wealth from their calamity.

Song

If I had only loved your flesh
And careless damned your soul to Hell,
I might have laughed and loved afresh,
And loved as lightly and as well,
And little more to tell.

But since to clasp your soul I strove,
(That mountebank, that fugitive)
And poured the river of my love
Through meshes that, like Danäe's sieve,
Drained all I had to give,

Now nightly by the tamarisks
I pace, and watch the risen moon
Litter the sea with silver disks;
And pray of night one only boon:
Let my release be soon.

Evening

When little lights in little ports come out,
Quivering down through water with the stars,
And all the fishing-fleet of slender spars
Range at their moorings, veer with tides about;

When race of wind is stilled and sails are furled,
And underneath our single riding-light
The curve of black-ribbed deck gleams palely white
And slumbrous waters pool a slumbrous world—

Then, and then only, have I thought how sweet
Old age might sink upon a windy youth,
Quiet beneath the riding-light of truth,
Weathered through storms, and gracious in retreat.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

A Last Judgment

He heard an angel say *now look for love*, and *look*
For lust the burning city of his heart replied.
And the angel whom his heart had life-time-long denied,
In silence stood apart and watched him while he took
The scarlet and the sceptre and the crown of pride—
Calling for the masquerade and music of his minions—
Calling for the loves whose murdered eyes had left him wise
With phantasies of flesh in wind-bewailed dominions.

* * * * * *

Their tongues were guttering lights; their songs were sated revels;
Their mimicries that sank to whispers and withdrew
Were couriers of corruption. Mocked and maimed, he knew
For scrawls on dungeon walls his priapismic devils.

* * * * * *

He woke; the sceptre broke; and cast away the crown;
Fought blindly with the strangling of the scarlet gown;
Cried out on hell and heaven, and saw the burning-bright
Angel with eyes inexorable and wings, once white
For mercy, now by storming judgment backward blown;
Saw absolution changed to unrelenting stone;
Shrieked; and aghast his ghost from flesh was whirled away
On roaring gales of gloom . . . He heard an angel say . . .

Early Chronology

Slowly the daylight left our listening faces.

* * * * * *

Professor Brown with level baritone
Discoursed into the dusk.
Five thousand years
He guided us through scientific spaces
Of excavated History; till the lone
Roads of research grew blurred; and in our ears
Time was the rumoured tongues of vanished races,
And Thought a chartless Age of Ice and Stone.

* * * * * *

The story ended. Then the darkened air
Flowered as he lit his pipe; an aureole glowed
Enwreathed with smoke; the moment's match-light showed
His rosy face, broad brow, and smooth grey hair,
Backed by the crowded book-shelves.
In his wake
An archæologist began to make
Assumptions about aqueducts (he quoted
Professor Sandstorm's book); and soon they floated
Through desiccated forests; mangled myths;
And argued easily round megaliths.

* * * * * *

Beyond the college garden something glinted;
A copper moon climbed clear above the trees.
Some Lydian coin? . . . Professor Brown agrees
That copper coins *were* in that culture minted;
But, as her whitening way aloft she took,
I thought she had a pre-dynastic look.

Storm on Fifth Avenue

A sallow waiter brings me six huge oysters . . .
Gloom shutters up the sunset with a plague
Of unpropitious twilight jagged asunder
By flashlight demonstrations. *Gee, what a peach*
Of a climate! (Pardon slang: these sultry storms
Afflict me with neurosis: rumbling thunder
Shakes my belief in academic forms.)

An oyster-coloured atmospheric rumpus
Beats up to blot the sunken daylight's gildings.
Against the looming cloud-bank, ivory pale,
Stand twenty-storied blocks of office buildings.
Snatched upward on a gust, lost news-sheets sail
Waif-like in lone arena of mid-air;
Flapping like melancholy kites, they scare
My gaze, a note of wildness in the scene.

Out on the pattering side-walk people hurry
For shelter, while the tempest swoops to scurry
Across to Brooklyn. Bellying figures clutch
At wide-brimmed hats and bend to meet the weather
Alarmed for fresh-worn silks and flurried feather.

Then hissing deluge splashes down to beat
The darkly glistening flatness of the street.
Only the cars nose on through rain-lashed twilight:
Only the Sherman Statue, angel-guided,
Maintains its mock-heroic martial gesture.

. . . . . .

A sallow waiter brings me beans and pork.
Outside there's fury in the firmament.
Ice-cream, of course, will follow; and I'm content . . .
O Babylon! O Carthage! O New York!

Grandeur of Ghosts

When I have heard small talk about great men
I climb to bed; light my two candles; then
Consider what was said; and put aside
What Such-a-one remarked and Someone-else replied.

They have spoken lightly of my deathless friends,
(Lamps for my gloom, hands guiding where I stumble)
Quoting, for shallow conversational ends,
What Shelley shrilled, what Blake once wildly muttered . . .

How can they use such names and be not humble?
I have sat silent; angry at what they uttered.
The dead bequeathed them life; the dead have said
What these can only memorise and mumble.

All Souls' Day

Close-wrapped in living thought I stand
Where death and daybreak divide the land,
Death and daybreak on either hand
  For exit and for entry;
While shapes like wind-blown shadows pass,
Lost and lamenting, "Alas, alas,
This body is only shrivelling grass,
  And the soul a starlit sentry
Who guards, and as he comes and goes,
Points now to daybreak's burning rose,
And now toward worldhood's charnel close
  Leans with regretless warning" . . .

I hear them thus—O thus I hear
My doomed companions crowding near,
Until my faith, absolved from fear,
  Sings out into the morning,

And tells them how we travel far,
From life to life, from star to star;
Exult, unknowing what we are;
  And quell the obscene derision
Of demon-haunters in our heart
Who work for worms and have no part
In Thee, O ultimate power who art
  Our victory and our vision.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

The Poem

Kiss me! It cannot be that I
  Who wove such songs of pain and fire
Last night—that fierce, desiring cry—
  It cannot be that I should tire?

Prove to me, prove you're not grown weak,
  Break down this citadel of sense,
Show me myself too faint to speak,
  Not armoured in my eloquence.

I swear my singing was begun
  Out of love's black and bitter deep—
But oh! the work was so well done
  I smiled, well-pleased, and fell on sleep.

Now all day long I must rehearse
  Each passionate and perfect line,
Mine the immaculate great verse—
  I do not know the thoughts for mine.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT

Permanence

Set within a desert lone,
  Circled by an arid sea,
Stands a figure carved in stone,
  Where a fountain used to be.

Two abraded, pleading hands
  Held below a shapeless mouth,
Human-like the fragment stands,
  Tortured by perpetual drought.

Once the form was drenched with spray,
  Deluged with the rainbow flushes;
Surplus water dashed away
  To the lotus and the rushes.

Time was clothed in rippling fashion,
  Opulence of light and air,
Beauty changing into passion
  Every hour and everywhere.

And the yearning of that race
  Was for something deep and tender,
Life replete with power, with grace,
  Touched with vision and with splendour.

Now no rain dissolves and cools,
  Dew is even as a dream,
The enticing far-off pools
  In a mirage only seem.

All the traces that remain
  Of the longings of that land
Are two hands that plead in vain
  Filled with burning sand.

C. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF

Deor

Weland among the Wurmas / wandered in exile,
A single-minded earl / he suffered hardship,
He had for his comrades / care and longing,
Winter-cold wretchedness; / woe he often found,
When Nithhad him / with need constrained,
Bitter sinew-cutting / of a better man.
That overpassing, / this also may.

To Beadohild was not / her brother's death
As sore in her soul / as herself's own plight,
For she clearly / conceived had
That she was mothering; / nor might she ever
With certainty think / how that should be.
We have heard, we many, / of Hilda's raping.
That overpassing, / this also may.

Was deep beyond plumbing / the passion of the Geat
So that love-sorrow him / of his sleep all robbed.
That overpassing, / this also may.

Theodoric governed / thirty winters
The Maerings' burgh; / to many 'twas known.
That overpassing, / this also may.

We have asked and learned of / Eormanrices
Wolfish thoughts / (he ruled widely the folk
Of the Gothic realm); / that was a grim King.

Sate many a wight / by sorrows bounden,
Woe awaiting, / wished well enough
That overcome / that kingdom were.
That overpassing, / this also may.

Sitteth any sorrowful, / severed from fortune,
His soul darkened, / to himself thinketh he
That his share of evil / endless is?
Let him then bethink him / that beyond this world
Our Lord All-Wise / often changeth;
To many an earl / His Mercy sheweth,
Certain glory; / to some of sorrows a portion.

And I of myself / will say this thing,
That for a while I was / the Heodening's bard;
To my duke was I dear; / and Deor was my name,
I had, for many winters, / a worthy office,
A handsome lord, until / Heorrenda now,
A man skilled in lays, / the land-right has taken
Which the Shelter of Earls / of old did give me.
That overpassing, / this also may.

W. K. SCUDAMORE

Kindly Night Hurries Hence

Kindly Night hurries hence,
  And the Dream-censer burns
Low. To my wakened sense
  The bitter light returns
    Of Everyday,
    Cold, Dusty, Grey!—
Lo! All the Commonwealth on Progress bent
  With sedulous intent,
There is no Time nor Place for Sentiment!

The Angel Israfel
  Of the Celestial Seven,
A lute, the Rabbis tell,
  Within his heart was given.
    And this, both day and night,
    With tremulous delight,
So thrills his Love, his brethren hov'ring round,
  The abyss of stars profound,
Yea—God Himself!—are pleasured at the sound.

But I, who hold
  Nor Wealth, nor Place,
I should be overbold
  Sang I aloud thy praise.
    But, humbly to and fro,
    On my mean work I go.
Nor dare to glance at thee so much above me,
  But let thy stolen glove be
Enough. *Yet ever thrums my heart:*
    "I love thee!"

EDWARD SHANKS

Woman's Song

No more upon my bosom rest thee,
Too often have my hands caressed thee,
  My lips thou knowest well, too well;
Lean to my heart no more thine ear
My spirit's living truth to hear
  —It has no more to tell.

In what dark night, in what strange night,
Burnt to the butt the candle's light
  That lit our room so long?
I do not know. I thought I knew
How love could be both sweet and true:
  I also thought it strong.

Where has the flame departed? Where,
Amid the empty waste of air,
  Is that which dwelt with us?
Was it a fancy? Did we make
Only a show for dead love's sake,
  It being so piteous?

No more against my bosom press thee,
Seek no more that my hands caress thee,
  Leave the sad lips thou hast known so well;
If to my heart thou lean thine ear
There grieving thou shalt only hear
  Vain murmuring of an empty shell.

Memory

In silence and in darkness memory wakes
Her million-sheathèd buds and breaks
That day-long winter when the light and noise
And hard bleak breath of the outward-looking will
Made barren her tender soil, when every voice
Of her million airy birds was dull or still.

One bud-sheath breaks:
One sudden voice awakes.

What change grew in our hearts seeing one night
That moth-winged ship drifting across the bay,
  Her broad sail dimly white
On cloudy waters and hills as vague as they?
Some new thing touched our spirits with distant delight,
Half seen, half noticed, as we loitered down,
Talking in whispers, to the little town,
  Down from the narrow hill—
  Talking in whispers, for the air so still
Imposed its stillness on our lips and made
A quiet equal with the equal shade
That filled the slanting walk. That phantom now
Slides with slack canvas and unwhispering prow
Through the dark sea that this dark room has made.

Or the night of the closed eyes will turn to day
And all day's colours start out of the gray.
The sun burns on the water. The tall hills
Push up their shady groves into the sky
And fail and cease where the intense light spills
Its parching torrent on the gaunt and dry
Rock of the further mountains, whence the snow
That softened their harsh edges long is gone
  And nothing tempers now
The hot flood falling on the barren stone.

O memory, take and keep
All that my eyes, your servants, bring you home—
Those other days beneath the low white dome
Of smooth-spread clouds that creep
As slow and soft as sleep.

When shade grows pale and the cypress stands upright,
Distinct in the cool light,
Rigid and solid as a dark-hewn stone;
And many another night
That melts in darkness on the narrow quays
And changes every colour and every tone
And soothes the waters to a softer ease,
When under constellations coldly bright
The homeward sailors sing their way to bed
On ships that motionless in harbour float.
The circling harbour-lights flash green and red;
And, out beyond, a steady travelling boat
Breaking the swell with slow industrious oars
At each stroke pours
Pale lighted water from the lifted blade.
Now in the painted houses all around
Slow darkening windows call
The empty unwatched middle of the night.
The tide's few inches rise without a sound.
On the black promontory's windless head,
The last awake, the fireflies rise and fall
And tangle up their dithering skein of light.

O memory, take and keep
All that my eyes, your servants, bring you home!
Thick through the changing year
The unexpected rich-charged moments come,
That you 'twixt wake and sleep
In the lids of the closed eyes shall make appear.

This is life's certain good,
Though in the end it be not good at all,
When the dark end arises
And the stripped, startled spirit must let fall
The amulets that could
Prevail with life's but not death's sad devices.

Then, like a child from whom an older child
Forces its gathered treasures,
Its beads and shells and strings of withered flowers,
Tokens of recent pleasures,
The soul must lose in eyes weeping and wild
Those prints of vanished hours.

The Rock Pool

(*To Miss Alice Warrender*)

This is the sea. In these uneven walls
A wave lies prisoned. Far and far away,
Outward to ocean as the slow tide falls,
Her sisters, through the capes that hold the bay,
Dancing in lovely liberty recede.
Yet lovely in captivity she lies,
Filled with soft colours, where the waving weed
Moves gently, and discloses to our eyes
Blurred shining veins of rock and lucent shells
Under the light-shot water; and here repose
Small quiet fish and the dimly glowing bells
Of sleeping sea-anemones that close
Their tender fronds and will not now awake
Till on these rocks the waves returning break.

The Beach of Shells

(*To Hugh Miller*)

There is a beach upon a western shore
Which those who know it call the Beach of Shells,
For there the secret tides conspire to pour

Yearly a harvest raised in the deep-sea swells,
The empty houses of bright water-things,
In heaps of whorls and cones and fluted bells.

These hither a certain drift of current brings,
And on a bayed shelf in the rock bestows
Year after year their softly shining rings

Of lavender and pearl, umber and rose,
Of iridescent sheen, dim-shaded dun,
Of red that smoulders and of red that glows,

To lie there glistening beneath the sun,
Beside the shouting or the singing sea,
All beautiful, and empty every one.

Who knows how long ocean's fertility
Hath borne this harvest or how many tides
Have swept it to this blank tranquillity

From where live water washes the rock's sides
On which these generations lived and grew
And where even now their enduring race abides?

For still, unseen beneath the covering blue,
Their children make new houses, ring on ring,
That hither shall be swept in season due,

And each a senseless, empty, lovely thing.
But where these nations of the sea are laid,
The passer-by who pauses, wondering

At how and when the Beach of Shells was made,
Finds but few perfect, as when on their rock
Each by its maker was inhabited.

The tide that threw them here with careless shock
Has cracked the delicate walls, and passing feet
Spread ruin every day with kick and knock,

And winter's frosts have worked, and summer's heat,
To lay the intricate, vacant chambers bare,
Where once the creature lived and found life sweet.

Would you know more than this, then kneel down there
And dig a little with exploring hand,
Finding more fragments still in every layer.

Till last you find the shells all ground to sand.

MOSSYARD, *September* 1929.

The Fairy's Child

I have known love, and thrice or more
  Has beauty on my pleading smiled:
For one or two my heart was sore
  And one I loved was a fairy's child.

Fairies are neither good nor evil
  But strange: they follow different laws.
Fool that I was in her to level
  Human effect and fairy cause!

With that deception sick and spent
  I wept alone, but now I see
She was, though wide her footsteps went,
  Faithful to love if not to me.

Overheard at a Literary Party

"Twenty per cent . . . twenty per cent . . ."
"That's what he *said*—I don't know what he meant . . ."
"Serial rights . . . serial rights . . ."
"The man isn't bad, but his friends are such frights . . ."
"Three guineas a thousand isn't enough . . ."
"He's not quite a fool but he writes dreadful stuff . . ."
"I haven't an agent . . ." "He told me he would
Declare in the *Times* that my sonnets were good . . ."
"Did you hear . . .?" "Have I told you . . .?" "Has anyone
said . . .?"
"She once had a vogue, but now it's quite dead . . ."
"The case will come on in the autumn, they say . . ."
"I'm trying to write in a different way . . ."
"The place is the States! I'm going in May! . . ."
"One likes her, of course, but, of course, she can't write . . ."
"His reviews don't mean much, but they always are bright . . ."
"Twenty per cent . . . twenty per cent . . .
I asked them for that but the letter they sent
Refused to go further than twelve and a half . . .
It isn't a joke, and I beg you won't laugh . . .
That's what they *said*—I don't know what they meant . . ."

FRANK SIDGWICK

The Water Song of Dinas Vawr

The mountain stream is colde:
And the valley stream is warmer;
We therefore felt the bolder
For bathing in the former;
The course of it we followed
To the mountain-cave that chilled it;
We found a pool and wallowed,
And the two of us just filled it.
We sweated down from Snowdon
To the pools of Aberglaslyn—
Their emollience they bestowed on
Feet that else had needed vaseline;
There's a tarn that made us gladder,
Though the chill of it was deathly,
By the Fox's Path on Cader
When descending to Dolgelly:
When dusk was dim and dewy,
With handkerchief for towel,
We plunged into Vyrnwy,
Where the accent's on the vowel:
We proved each other right on
All the Principles of Bathing,
Condemned the Front at Brighton
With vituperation scathing,
Despised the woman-bather—
Pedetemptim with a shidder—
With a costume to enswathe her
And a coiffure to consider.
A swim may be ideal

For leisurely abstersion:
To connoisseurs the be-all
And the end-all is Immersion:
So tearing off our breeches
And dropping shirts in huddles,
We dabbled in the ditches,
And grovelled in the puddles.
Nor Solomon in his glory
May envy us our raiment,
When waters chill provide our thrill
And the afterglow our payment.

Blankshire

Long ere the Spheres were moved to dawn,
Or Mother Earth from Ocean rose,
Ere plantigrades, Amœba's spawn,
Developed rudimentary toes,
When first from Hence the Future Tense
Began to conjugate To-Be,
In crude pothook God's Domesday Book
Wrote down this shire for me—for Me.

Let Shropshire boast twelve-winded skies,
Sussex the draught of her hill-air[1];
Our stagnant pools engender flies,
Nor ever wind blows loudly there
Yet though the fen be bare of men,
Nor bosky launds mine eyes assuage,
Still can I say (with David), "Yea,
I have a goodly heritage."

No sentimental flowers cloak
The pleachèd hedge, the stolchy ditch;

[1] This word is curiously misspelt in the original MS.

Fallow and furrow swarm and choke
With spurge and dodder, vetch and twitch:
Yet am I gay when I survey
Where rolls and rises, fold on fold,
O'er vale and down the flooded, brown,
Dam goodness of the unwieldy Wold.

Daylong the serf with rheumy eyes
Stares idly o'er the sodden plains
From Devil's Dyke to Charnel Rise
Where once his forebears swung in chains:
Now (Ichabod!) he hops the clod,
Inhausts the frigid noontide quart
Of tea, and hoes two crooked rows
Of late potatoes black with wart.

Here clunch-pit warrens breed the burr
That trips to death the shag-haired goat,
And bindweed and dwarf juniper
Trammel the blood-lust of the stoat;
Dank hellebore her fatal spore
Spreads in the thoughtless leveret's way,
Smelling like dusk at Caer-on-Usk
Or l'heure d'absinthe in Paraguay.

A myriad mouldwarps undermine
Our lichened dolmens one and all;
By thwaite and hanger, tor and chine,
Our cromlechs crumble to their fall:
Of Bretnold's fane that stayed the Dane,
And shrined both saint and buccaneer,
Twelve hugy stones above their bones
Alone through dock and darnel peer.

* * * * *

Let not Imperial Me be shamed
To swallow hard, when I have heard

The mute inglorious parish named
  Wherein my birth is registered.
Each to his lot: though mine be not
  Worthy a true blue White Man's hire,
Let me presume the Angel of Doom
  Erred in allotting me this shire.

J. C. SQUIRE

Anarchy

In the dark, in bed, the brows of lovers will touch
Closely, with nothing at all between bone and bone,
Coffer against coffer of mind, and they will not move.
Silent they'll be, their hearts overflowing with love,
Or sometimes kiss and whisper, or sweetly moan.
Yet silent or whispering, lying two lovers alone,
Locked from the world in the dark, they are separate still,
An impassable gulf between, across which they call
Like voice to voice from shores of a lightless sea.
A moment, surrendered in climax of ecstasy
Only aware of souls' and bodies' kiss
They may burn with the wordless knowledge of mutual bliss,
Completeness of giving; yet the flush of fever goes,
And its flame dies; and gateways noiseless close,
And behind are wings again, and lonely flight,
The cold swift mathematical movement of thought,
Or wandering memory straying like a moth in the night.

Thus lovers, and by day
Of all they think, how little the dearest can say.
Even those most pure and devoted must daily wage
The wars of love and the sweet diplomacies
Where self will plot for its ends in a fair disguise,
Or yield to love, for the sake of love, with seeming.
And coldness they sometimes know and even rage
Remorsefully checked, and days divorced when the dreaming
Of obscured and oblivious love is forgotten; and scheming
And striving in the world the ego fights for its own
And neglect of love may bring of lovers the best

To a place where a careless petulant word expressed
May open before their feet a gulf of dread
In whose depths is the dreadful image of love lying dead,
And they shrink from a lonely life without ever a friend . . .

Though they love and would die for each other; and will to the end.

Thus these most close and dear,
Even these with whom the pitiful heart has been bared
In its weakness, and shame's most intimate secrets shared,
(Though candour's utter prostration could never disclose
The whole of that secret world that so quickly grows).
And of others how little we know, that we know for true,
The strangers we call our friends; we see what they do
For an hour a day may be, and hear what they think
For an hour a year; and ever we stand on the brink
Of rash disclosure; and ever in fear we shrink
With a friendly smile lest dreadfully there should be
A stripping of enmity's naked roots, or afraid
In all our friendship's complicate web to see
A fabric of exploitation or trust betrayed . . .
A conventional waiving of self as we talk, a pretence
That the caverns of self are not there, a thick wall of defence
From acquaintance, yet ever there glowers the unsleeping within.
And, beyond, each one has a world of foes; each man
Will anger to blood against person and class and clan,
Swayed by suspicion, and fear and hate and lust,
And conflict of loves that is ever the most unjust.
And out on the verge of the world are the tribes of sin
Whose good is our evil, whose alien instincts show
In their eyes, deep secular thoughts that we never could know.
A chequered tempestuous world where the watcher sees
Men coveting, fighting and dying, an endless strife
In ignorant fever for power and pride and life:
The destined prey of the hosts of desire and disease.

Yet sighs the absurd unreasoning voice of our blood
For a world, alas!—and there is no bitter cold there,
Nor scorching heat, nor blossom with worm in the bud,
And babes do not die, nor blindness comes to the old there,
But the sun shines fair, and the rain falls soft, and the clime
Conspires with the seed for the loveliest fruits of time,
And the young are strong, and the old go green to the grave
Without pain, and none is master and none is slave.
And music sounds from the boats, and garlands are woven
By maids at noon, and great calm statues are cloven
Out of the cliffs, by the shrines of sunnier gods.

Divine, magnificent spirit of man that will face
Invincible ever the battle with hopeless odds
And cannot but dream ere he falls of a time and a race,
Of a day when the world of men maturer grown
Will live without law in perfect wisdom and grace
Like the solar system hanging in awful space,
Its parts sustained serenely by love alone!

The Rebel Heart

MAN

Heart, why dost thou ache? . . .

HEART

Thou knowest why I ache
All the long, dark, and tired, and turning night-time
Trying, trying to break!

What is thy secret now?
Is it indolence this time:
Trusting in faithless fortune that has made thee
Accessory to a crime?

Or cowardice? Art thou afraid
To face stark nature still,
Or of some single word, or shame, or battle
That must come if it will?

Or does thine ancient lust
Once more insatiate burn?
Or hast thou asked again a truth from others
Thou would'st not dare return? . . .

Ah! dreamer, slave of dreams,
I hear thy childish cry:
"Why will not these things be as I would have them?
Others should fail, not I:

"Sink in the sullen flood,
Be tortured in the fire:
But I, the universe was made to give me
The whole of my desire!"

Late Snow

The heavy train through the dim country went rolling, rolling
Interminably, passing misty snow-covered ploughland ridges
That merged in the snowy sky; came turning meadows, fences,
Came gullies and passed, and ice-coloured streams under frozen
bridges.

Across the travelling landscape evenly drooped and lifted
The telegraph wires, thick ropes of snow in the windless air;
They drooped and paused and lifted again to unseen summits,
Drawing the eyes and soothing them, often, to a drowsy stare.

Singly in the snow the ghosts of trees were softly pencilled,
Fainter and fainter, in distance fading, into nothingness gliding,
But sometimes a crowd of the intricate silver trees of fairyland
Passed, marvellous close and clear, the phantom world hiding.

O untroubled these moving mantled miles of shadowless shadows,
And lovely the film of falling flakes, so wayward and slack:
But I thought of many a mother-bird screening her nestlings,
Sitting silent with wide bright eyes, snow on her back.

To a Musician

Musician, with the bent and brooding face,
White brow and thunderous eyes: you are not playing
Merely the music that dead hand did trace.

Musician, with the lifted resolute face,
And scornful smile about your closed mouth straying,
And hand that moves with swift or fluttering grace:
It is not that man's music you are playing.

The grave and delicate tunes he made you are playing,
Each march and dirge and dance he made endures,
But changed and mastered, and these things you're saying,
These joys and sorrows are not his but yours.

You take those notes of his: you seize and fling
His music as a dancer flings her veil,
Toss it and twist it, mould it, make it sing,
Whisper, shout savagely, lament and wail,

Rush like a hurricane, pause and faint and fail:
And, as I watch, my body and soul are bound
Helpless, immovable, in thongs of sound.

Lonely and strange musician, standing there,
Your bent ear listening to your own soul speaking,
I hear vibrating on the smitten air
The crying of your suffering and your seeking.

Agonied! raptured! frustrate! you are haunted,
Pursued, beset, beleaguered, filled, possessed,
By all you are, all things you have lost and wanted,
Things clear, too clear, things only to be guessed.

I do not know what earlier scenes you knew,
What sweet reproachful memories you hold
Of broken dreams you had before you grew
So conscious and so lonely and so old.

I do not know what women's words have taught
Your heart, and only vaguely know by name
The many wandering cities where you have sought
Splendour, and found the hollowness of fame,

Or where your sad and gentle reveries pass
To family and home—who have for signs
Of all your childhood only the imagined grass
Of a bright steppe, the wind running in lines,

And only some old fairy-tale of sleighing,
Dark snow-deep forests, endless turning pines,
Bells tinkling, and wolves howling, and hounds baying.

Vague is your past, yet as your violin sings,
Its wildness held in desperate control,
I feel them all, that world of bygone things
That have left their wounds and wonders in your soul.

Out in all weathers you have been, my friend,
Climbed into dawn, stood solitary and stark
Against the ashen quiet of twilight's end,
Brooded beneath the night's unanswering dark;

Through battering tempests you have blindly won,
And lived, and found a medicine for your scars
In resolution taken from the sun
And patience from the still unsleeping stars.

And here, in this crowded place an hour staying,
  Your dim orchestra measuring off your bars,
So pale and proud you stand, your secrets flaying:

Resolving the tangle, pouring through your song
  All your deep ache for Beauty, calm above
Your bitter silent anger and the strong
  Ferocity and tenderness of your love,

Loud challenges and sweet and cynic laughter,
  Movements of joy spontaneous and pure,
Remorse, and the dull grief that glimmers after
  The obstinate sins you know you will not cure.

I see you subtly lying, soberly weighing
  Gross questions, jesting at the things you hate,
In apathy, and wild despair, and praying,
  Bowed down before the shadowy knees of Fate,

And fearfully behind the visible groping,
  And standing by the heart's bottomless pit, and shrinking,
Who have known the lure and mockery of hoping,
  The comic terrible uselessness of thinking.

O gay and passionate, gloomy and serene,
  Your quivering fingers laugh and weep and curse
For all the phantoms you have ever been.
  Yet would you wish another universe?

Let peace come if it will: your last long note
  Dies on the quiet breast of space; and now
They clap: I see again your square frock-coat,
  Dark, foreign fiddler, you have stopped: you bow.

A Dog's Death

The loose earth falls in the grave like a peaceful regular breathing;
Too like, for I was deceived a moment by the sound:
It has covered the heap of bracken that the gardener laid above him,
Quiet the spade swings: there we have now his mound.

A patch of fresh earth on the floor of the wood's renewing chamber:
All around is grass and moss and the hyacinth's dark green sprouts:
And oaks are above that were old when his fiftieth sire was a puppy:
And far away in the garden I hear the children's shouts.

Their joy is remote as a dream. It is strange how we buy our sorrow
For the touch of perishing things, idly, with open eyes;
How we give our hearts to brutes that will die in a few seasons,
Nor trouble what we do when we do it; nor would have it otherwise.

ERIC CLOUGH TAYLOR

If To Be Thrust from Eden's Gate

If to be thrust from Eden's gate
  Were exile spent with thee,
I could desire no kinder fate
  Than that divine decree:
Nay, if I had a mind to count the cost,
What could it be, but Paradise well lost?

For in a garden where thy feet
  No longer touched the ground,
What verdure, or what blossoming sweet,
  What fragrance could be found?
There's not a living herb, or tree, or flower
That could survive thine absence for an hour!

When Kindness like a Planet Sets

When kindness like a planet sets,
  And bitter thoughts infect the mind,
When love her phantasy forgets,
  When blind suspicion leads the blind,

Imagination fainting lies,
  With fallen stars her ways are strewn,
And fancy, once her firebird, flies
  To the cold caverns of the moon.

SARA TEASDALE

"Beautiful, Proud Sea"

Careless for ever, beautiful, proud sea,
You laugh in happy thunder all alone,
You fold upon yourself, you dance your dance
Impartially on drift-weed, sand or stone.

You make us believe that we can outlive death,
You make us for an instant, for your sake,
Burn, like stretched silver of a wave
Not breaking, but about to break.

THOMAS THORNELY

The Wasp That Was

From life in three-dimensioned space
He drops to death in two;
Flat as unruffled ocean's face,
Or flat as falls a common-place,
He lies beneath my shoe.

His tactless disconcerting way
Of aureoling my head
Has docked him of his little day,
And turned his form's organic play
To matter thinly spread.

By what compulsion he was driven
To court contention thus,
And why that vibrant orbit given,
May possibly be known to heaven,
But is not known to us.

The Last Prayer

(Suggested by Revelation, Chapter XXI.)

O were it mine to win unchallenged way
(Presumptuous thought!) where Zion's braveries are;
Where Saints, more bright than summer-lightning's play,
Send their loud adorations pealing far
Through jewelled courts of day,
Still one last prayer it would be mine to pray—
"Leave, sometimes leave, those gates of pearl ajar!"

That I may steal from too ebullient bliss,
And on a less delirious beauty feed,
In some cool dell where lights and shadows kiss,
And (Take it not amiss,
Far-sounding Seraphs!) not a note is heard
Of harp or viol, only the piping reed
Of woodland rill and unbedizened bird.

Retirement

If on the top of his Tartarian hill,
The torturing stone of Sisyphus were still;
If the Tantalian wave should woo the lip,
Ixion's wheel rest like becalmèd ship;
Would the freed sufferers long that ease enjoy,
Or cast regretful glances on their late employ?

I know them all, for here they all repair,
To physic opulence with healing air;
Sir Tantalus is sinking to his grave,
Killed by the fond compliance of his wave;
Ixion, wiser, still can pleasure feel,
Lending his aid to turn another's wheel;
While Sisyphus (of Sisyphus and Co.)
Hopes soon to start his stone from its old place below.

A Fenland Stream

I knew thee first when life was young,
And scorned thee for thy sauntering pace,
Called thee a singer with bridled tongue,
A runner that ever had shunned the race.

"If thou would'st win my praise," I said,
"And stir my heart as may native rills,

Bid the sun suck thee from thy bed,
And bear thee in storm-clouds to the hills;

"Taste there life's thrills, and rapturous le:
From crag to crag in a glory of spray,
Fling loose thy fettered song, and keep
Unsullied all thy channelled way.

"No drowsy weeds shall clog thy course,
No serried osiers wall thee round;
There live—a bright embodied force,
Linked to the very soul of sound."

But now, too many a change I see
To wish thee other than thou art;
Thy stillness mirrors heaven for me,
And, more than music, feeds my heart.

To my Subliminal Self

How came we thus together?
Dark Spirit housed in me!
Bound by what fatal tether
Closer than claw to feather,
Or flower to honey-bee?

Thou wak'st when I am sleeping,
Ousting me from my throne,
My past lies in thy keeping,
I spend long hours in reaping
The tares that thou hast sown.

A sage that oft will blunder,
A saint that stoops to shame,
In all thy ways a wonder,
Thou rendest life asunder,
And I must bear the blame.

When I am tuned to sadness,
Thou unabashed wilt play,
But in thy ribald gladness
Confusion lives, and madness
Is never far away.

Wilt thou be standing by me,
In Heaven's all-judging day.
Pleading with them that try me,
Or wilt thou then deny me,
And go thy separate way?

HERBERT TRENCH

Song

Since I have given thee all my very heart,
  Since I have staked so deep and dangerously
All that I have of hope till breath depart
  And flung my little kingdom on the die;

Since now there streams over my land and sea
  This dread Love—strange as light—beyond recall,
I am thy prisoner; yes, and thou art free
  With but a touch to lay in ruin all.

W. J. TURNER

Man With Girl

The Sun above the desert sands
  Burns a full orb of gold,
Cold daylight falls upon our streets,
  Townsmen no Sun behold.

Shy antelopes and tufted trees
  Move by eve's shining pools;
White faces streaming in dark streets
  Our wind of sunset cools.

The tall giraffe, the Moon's bright horn,
  The shining waterfall,
I saw in the bright-limbed animal
  I danced with in the hall.

The Towers of Tantalus

The Towers of Tantalus I saw
  Above untrodden streets of Time;
The sunlight and the moonlight shone
  Together, on great spars of rime.

Terrestrial lilies were those Towers
  In calm sky pools of that dark noon;
Calm lay on rocks of frozen light
  The shadow of the Sun and Moon.

Still, bright-gold chrysanthemums
  Shone in the polished, dim, jade halls,

And at small windows in still woods
  Hung snow-curved, shining waterfalls.

Those pinnacles, sky-pointed, sang
  A cloud-embroidered song of doom,
The flowers sang in the halls below—
  Wax sprays of light in ebon gloom.

The waters frozen in the woods
  Were mirrored on the shadowed sloors;
Cold constellations from the sky
  Hung low, dream-captured at the doors.

'Twas music hewn upon the air
  Flashed for a moment on these eyes—
I heard the trumpets crumple, and
  I stared once more at transient skies.

MILTON WALDMAN

The Marriage of Saint Francis

The graven plane-trees tease the sight,
From gold to silver soft the light
Melts in the crucible of night . . .
  Whilst waits the anxious bridegroom.

All circumstance of Wealth and Pride,
Of Art and Ease has he denied;
Choosing Poverty for bride
  In high and holy rapture.

Yet stands he now in new-born fear;
The demon Doubt has sought his ear:
"Even Heaven may be dear
  When bought with Earth's whole value.

"What if she come in loathsome guise
To fright the sense, revolt the eyes?
Grace above her promised prize,
  But all life fair her forfeit?"

He hears the winds their whispers raise
To song, as they her garments graze,
Sees her part the azure haze—
  In both hands bringing beauty.

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING

Autumn

Autumn, thou splendour that the year puts on
  To meet death royally, then casts again
  Before its conqueror as in disdain,
Smiling upon him, winning more than won:
Thou rich and various comparison
  In which the summer, like a monarch slain,
  Lying in state, descants upon things vain
By the dread silence of oblivion:
Thou blazoned hatchment hung upon the door,
  Whose many hues declare an ancient line
    Whereof the latest heir hath travelled hence,
Warning the rich, a wonder to the poor:
  Thou quiet dream of death, thou mortal sign
    Of beauty's own immortal confidence!

MARY MORISON WEBSTER

Song in Autumn

As the snake his skin doth cast,
When the summer's through,
So my grief I doff at last,
Old and outworn too.
With the snakeskin and the leaf
I discard my ancient grief.

Ye who pass this way in pride,
Softly, softly tread!
I, who lay my grief aside
On an autumn bed,
May not find new joy so rare
As this delicate despair.

DOROTHY WELLESLEY

The Deserted House

Knowing the house deserted, amid the darkness of trees,
That seemed to my memories
Flat as vernal scenery upon a stage,
Greatly daring I came to the house again;
Came straight, for I knew its intimacies;
Broke through bracken and wood to the tower with the weather-vane:
Came to visit the place I thought not to visit again.

And knowing the secret ways between tree and tree,
I came through undergrowth to the falling folly once more,
Where we played together, my brother and I, and he
Who died by his own hand, another brother to me.
But the folly had gone; and down I kneeled on the floor
That remained, a great slab of stone, the tombstone of three.

And the ghosts rose up: children who trotted beside
Me, a child again. But alone I had not died.

And that time I feared the deserted house, and the brake,
The trees and the glades of the wood,
I feared the forsaken garden,
For none of the living were there, and another ghost,
He who gave me life (and his spirit I feared the most),
Walked, silent, forever alone, alongside the lake,
Whom no living woman had understood.

And I came yet a second time to that house and garden,
With the one whom I love, saying: "Come, let us enter the house,

That I feared so before to do."
And we climbed by a window and stood
On the old blank landing I knew,
Where, a child, on the stairway to bed,
In a corner I huddled alone to look at the stars,
Where first the awe and the fear of infinity took me.
We went up the hollow stairs and after us followed the dead.
In the empty nursery I cried: "There, there, was the bed,
Where she beat me and shook me,
When I cried with terror at night."

Then the one whom I love
Held me long on that spot, held me deep,
Murmuring: "Here is the healing,
Here is the answer, the pardon."
Since when I play with the ghosts in the house and the garden
In dreams,
When asleep.

Horses

"*Newmarket or St. Leger*" . . .

Who, in the garden pony carrying skeps
Of grass or fallen leaves, his knees gone slack,
Round belly, hollow back,
Sees the Mongolian Tarpan of the steppes?
Or, in the Shire, with plaits and feathered feet,
The war-horse like the wind the Tartar knew?
Or in the Suffolk Punch spells out anew
The wild grey asses fleet
With stripe from head to tail, and moderate ears?
In cross sea-donkeys, sheltering as storm gathers,
The mountain zebra maned upon the withers,
With round enormous ears?

Or, in a thoroughbred in stable garb
Of crested rug, ranged orderly, will mark
The wistful eyelashes so long and dark,

And call to mind the old blood of the Barb?
And that slim island on whose bare campaigns
Galloped with flying manes
For a King's pleasure, churning surf and scud,
A white Arabian stud?

That stallion, teazer to Hobgoblin, free
And foaled upon a plain of Barbary:
Godolphin Barb, who dragged a cart for hire
In Paris, but became a famous sire,
Covering all lovely mares. And she who threw
Rataplan to the Baron, loveliest shrew;
King Charles' royal-mares. The Dodsworth Dam;
And the descendants: Yellow Turk, King Tom;
And Lath out of Roxana, famous foal;
Careless; Eclipse, unbeaten in the race,
With white blaze on his face;
Prunella who was dam to Parasol.

Blood Arab, pony, pedigree, no name,
All horses are the same:
The Shetland stallion stunted by the damp,
Yet filled with self-importance, stout and small;
The Cleveland slow and tall;
New Forests that may ramp
Their lives out, being branded, breeding free
When bluebells turn the Forest to a sea,
When mares with foal at foot flee down the glades,
Sheltering in bramble coverts
From mobs of corn-fed lovers;
Or, at the acorn-harvest, in stockades,
A round-up being afoot, will stand at bay,
Or, making for the heather clearings, splay
Wide-spread towards the bogs by gorse and whin,
Roped as they flounder in
By foresters.

But hunters as day fails
Will take the short-cut home across the fields;
With slackened rein will stoop through darkening wealds,
With creaking leathers skirt the swedes and kales.
'Patient, adventuring still,
A horse's ears bob on the distant hill,
He starts to hear
A pheasant chuck or whirr, having the fear
In him of ages filled with war and raid,
Night-gallop, ambuscade;
Remembering adventures of his kin
With giant winged worms that coiled round mountain bases,
And Nordic tales of young gods riding races
Up courses of the rainbow. Here within
The depth of Hampshire hedges, does he dream
How Athens woke to hear above her roofs
The welkin flash and thunder to the hoofs
Of dawn's tremendous team?

Moths

Now with a humming from the greening skies,
Sphinx moths with course set true,
Shoot forth, torpedoes with a spinning screw,
And bulbous lantern eyes;

Now hanging round the trumpet of the flowers,
The Death's head, hairy, squeaking as he comes,
A squeal of bagpipes and a blur of drums,
Seeks his black food, the Deadly Nightshade; scours
The garden like a vampire after prey,
And fading fades, an air machine away.

Now those small moths that in their infancy
Feed on the wild sea spurge,
Growing above the surge

That creams the slate slabs of the Cornish sea,
Come for the honeysuckles swinging loose
On the brick summer house;
And Leopard Moths that feed upon the spindles,
And lilac bark in spring,
With dark blue spots upon a wedge-like wing,
Loving the lights, flying to cottage candles;
The Ghost Swift moth that feigns
Death in the capturer's net, with such deep arts;
And Gypsies horned and lean, straight showers of darts;
Dark Dagger from the plains;
And sweet Peach blossom feeding on the brambles;
The small coquettish Puss;
And that great blunderbuss,
That bumps on homing farmers and down drumbles
On footpaths through the midnight fields of May;
Blue moths that seek chalk hills above the leas,
And scarlet Tigers in the apple-trees;
These are the moths that linger on the day.

But others will seek out the darkest hours,
To make their drunkard onslaught on the flowers.
Drab, stout, like little mice
That scramble after rice.
Fen moths that feed
On parsley, wild angelica, lucerne,
Companions of newt and leech and hern,
And Mottled Rustics that love teazel weed;
Waved Umber moth that in the forks of pears
Spins its soft silk cocoon,
Breaking to wing in the short nights of June
To feast upon dog-roses and sweet-briars:
The moth named Phoenix, symbol of the rest,
For all their brood
Were grubs that bred their beauty in a wood;
Freedom made manifest:

A faith assured, hailed glorious in a husk,
Seen as a whirl of wings, and windy lights
On hills, in hollows of soft earthly nights;
Ardent adventurers across the dusk,
That fly, fanatics freed, and reach a bed
Where above tapers tall
A dead man's shadow dances on a wall,
And shower their burning faiths about his head.

For they must travel far:
Out of the spreading south Spring Usher blew;
Tattered beside him flew
The Chinese Character, the Cinnabar;
The Brindled Pug, and the small Seraphim
Blew in with butterflies
Out of the tropic skies:
Sea-going beauties, that will lightly skim
Around the crow's-nest, or the baking brasses,
Telling the sailor of the coastal walk,
Harebells on slopes of chalk,
Stillness of quaking grasses;
That will not rest, but wearily take flight
Into the ocean night;
Or taking passage on an old tea clipper,
Seek hiding in the sails, and finding this,
Work round to England as a chrysalis:
The Painted Lady with the Dingy Skipper.

And many with wide wing and lustrous name
Blew once, in early time, across the sea:
Paphia, Silver Washed Fritillary,
And that imperial dame
Vanessa Atalanta, who was borne
In sunny splendour on an offshore gale
From coasts of Africa, to meet the hail
Battering the Kentish pebbles in the dawn.

I. A. WILLIAMS

Spring Sunshine

To fiery sun, blue firmament,
  To golden bloom, and emerald frond,
Oh! what a piteous instrument
  Am I, who only half respond!

To "Anon"

May Clio never come to rout you
  From that kind shade around you hung:
Enough to know one thing about you—
  The cadenced beauty of your tongue.

MARGARET L. WOODS

On the Step

The little old lady
Was walking along the street.
She carried her head high though of small stature,
And although he · ermine mantle was yellow with age
And her bonnet of an old fashion,
The little old lady
Looked like a well-born woman and moved like a queen.

Yet for all her composure,
Fear was in her heart,
For she had no knowledge,
No remembrance how she came into the street.
She remembered last walking alone in her garden
At Porto Fino, under the mimosas,
And here she was in England,
In a quiet street, approaching the door of her house.

"It is only a dream," she thought,
"I shall soon awaken."
Still fear was in her heart.
"I have lost my memory," she thought, "No one must know it."
So she came to the door of her house and felt for her key,
And the key was not there.
She laid her hand on the bell. It eluded her fingers.

A man walking in the street,
The quiet street,
Seeing her trouble, came to her aid courteously.

He would ring the bell. Hardly was his hand upon it
When she saw that the door had been open,
Open all the while.
She passed into the hall and on to the staircase.

The eyes of the great portraits
Hung on the walls
Followed her now, just as they had always followed her,
Beautiful child, beautiful girl, triumphant woman.
The painted eyes followed her,
The little old lady,
Ascending the wide stairs in her empty home.

She came to the library.
A fire burned on the hearth.
Her father sat beside it in the familiar attitude.
One foot stretched to the blaze, supple in its slipper
—The white head and the black brows were her own—
He leaned back in his chair
With eyes half closed,
His long slender fingers placed tip against tip.

So great was her joy,
Seeing her father,
She forgot all wonder, she forgot all incredulity.
"Father!" she cried.
He stood up and his arms were about her.
"O Father!" she said, "I have been so frightened.
I have lost my memory."
And he, caressing her—"Poor little Annie!"

Meantime the bell
Had hardly ceased to sound,
Pealing through the empty house.
Only a young maid-servant heard it and came,
Slowly unbarring, opened the heavy door.

A man stood on the step,
His back towards her,
Looking like one amazed up and down the street.

"I rang the bell," he said,
"For an old lady
Who stood on the step here, trying to ring it,
Now, all in a moment, the lady has vanished."
"What was she like, Sir?"
The maid inquired.
"A small woman, yet she looked like a great lady.

"She had crisp white hair
And black eyebrows
And an old-fashioned bonnet with wide ribbons
Tied under her chin" –"But that is my Lady.
O Sir!" cried the maid,
"That is my Lady.
Sir, she died abroad suddenly this morning."

But the little old lady
Did not know that she was dead.

DAVID McKEE WRIGHT

Hector

He strode across the schoolroom in July,
Great Hector, clanging in his brazen mail;
And all the cringing Greeks, with faces pale,
Creaked into jabbering Ks and turned to fly.
Achilles, safe because he could not die,
Cheated and won; and all the lines grew stale.
The life was gone from out the shabby tale;
And back in Homer's teeth we flung the lie.

We fought for Troy behind a mossy wall;
We burned the Grecian ships below a tree . . .
Ah, that great war was forty years ago!
Yet still I know that Hector did not fall;
For when the bell rang truce to friend and foe,
Achilles, lying Greek, was under me!

AUSTRALIA.

W. B. YEATS

My Descendants

(From *Meditations in Time of Civil War*)

I

Having inherited a vigorous mind
From my old fathers I must nourish dreams
And leave a woman and a man behind
As vigorous of mind, and yet it seems
Life scarce can cast a fragrance on the wind,
Scarce spread a glory to the morning beams,
When the torn petals strew the garden plot;
And there's but common greenness after that.

II

And what if my descendants lose the flower
Through natural declension of the soul,
Through too much business with the passing hour,
Through too much play, or marriage with a fool;
And find a comfort in it? May this tower
Become a roofless ruin that the owl
May build in the cracked masonry and cry
Her desolation to the desolate sky!

III

The Primum Mobile that fashioned us
Has made the very owls in circles move,
And I, that count myself most prosperous
Seeing that love and friendship are enough,

For an old neighbour's friendship chose the house
And decked and altered it for a girl's love,
And know whatever flourish and decline
These stones remain their monument and mine.

The Road at My Door

(From *Meditations in Time of Civil War*)

I

An affable Irregular,
A heavily built Falstaffian man,
Comes cracking jokes of Civil war
As though to die by gunshot were
The finest play under the sun.

II

A brown Lieutenant and his men,
Half dressed in National uniform,
Stand at my door, and I complain
Of the foul weather, hail and rain,
A pear tree broken by the storm.

III

I count these feathered balls of soot,
The moor-hen guides upon the stream,
To silence the envy in my thought;
And turn towards my chamber, caught
In the cold snows of a dream.

All Souls' Night

I

'Tis All Souls' Night and the great Christ Church bell,
And many a lesser bell, sound through the room,
For it is now midnight;

And two long glasses brimmed with muscatel
Bubble upon the table. A ghost may come,
For it is a ghost's right,
His element is so fine,
Being sharpened by his death,
To drink from the wine-breath
While our gross palates drink from the whole wine.

II

I need some mind, that if the cannon sound
From every quarter of the world, can stay
Wound in mind's pondering,
As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound;
Because I have a marvellous thing to say,
A certain marvellous thing
None but the living mock,
Though not for sober ear;
It may be all that hear
Should laugh and weep an hour upon the clock.

III

H——'s the first I call. He loved strange thought
And knew that sweet extremity of pride
That's called platonic love,
And that to such a pitch of passion wrought
Nothing could bring him, when his lady died,
Anodyne for his love.
Words were but wasted breath;
One dear hope had he:
The inclemency
Of that or the next winter would be death.

IV

Two thoughts were so mixed up I could not tell
Whether of her or God he thought the most,
But think that his mind's eye,
When upward turned, on one sole image fell,

And that a slight companionable ghost,
Wild with divinity,
Had so lit up the whole
Immense miraculous house,
The Bible promised us,
It seemed a gold-fish swimming in a bowl.

V

On Florence Emery I call the next,
Who finding the first wrinkles on a face
Admired and beautiful,
And knowing that the future would be vexed
With 'minished beauty, multiplied commonplace,
Preferred to teach a school,
Away from neighbour or friend
Among dark skins, and there
Permit foul years to wear
Hidden from eyesight to the unnoticed end.

VI

Before that end much had she ravelled out
From a discourse in figurative speech
By some learned Indian
On the soul's journey. How it is whirled about,
Wherever the orbit of the moon can reach,
Until it plunge into the sun;
And there free and yet fast,
Being both Chance and Choice,
Forget its broken toys
And sink into its own delight at last.

VII

And I call up MacGregor from the grave,
For in my first hard springtime we were friends,
Although of late estranged.
I thought him half a lunatic, half knave,

And told him so, but friendship never ends;
And what if mind seem changed,
And it seem changed with the mind,
When thoughts rise up unbid
On generous things that he did
And I grow half contented to be blind?

VIII

He had much industry at setting out,
Much boisterous courage, before loneliness
Had driven him crazed;
For meditations upon unknown thought
Make human intercourse grow less and less;
They are neither paid nor praised.
But he'd object to the host,
The glass because my glass;
A ghost-lover he was
And may have grown more arrogant being a ghost.

IX

But names are nothing. What matter who it be,
So that his elements have grown so fine
The fume of muscatel
Can give his sharpened palate ecstasy?
No living man can drink from the whole wine.
I have mummy truths to tell
Whereat the living mock,
Though not for sober ear,
For maybe all that hear
Should laugh and weep an hour upon the clock.

X

Such hought—such thought have I that hold it tight
Till meditation master all its parts,
Nothing can stay my glance
Until that glance run in the world's despite

To where the damned have howled away their hearts,
And where the blessed dance;
Such thought, that, in it bound,
I need no other thing
Wound in mind's wandering
As mummies in the mummy-cloth are wound.

A. J. YOUNG

August

The cows stood in a thunder-cloud of flies
As, lagging through the field with trailing feet,
I kicked up scores of skipper butterflies
That hopped a little way, lazy with heat.

The wood I sought was in deep shelter sunk,
Though clematis leaves shone with a glossy sweat
And creeping over ground and up tree-trunk
The ivy in the sun gleamed bright and wet.

Trees with the soot of August suns were black,
Though splashed in places with a bright fire-light:
I praised the dæmon of that dim wood-track
Where pepper moths were flittering by night.

Songs brief as Chinese poems the birds sung;
And insects of all sheens, blue, brown and yellow,
Darted and twisted in their flight and hung
On air that groaned like hoarse sweet violoncello.

No leaf in the least breath of wind was turning,
And foliage hung on trees like heavy wigs;
White suns fringed with long rainbow hairs were burning
Inflammable leaves and the light-blackened twigs.

From that small sun patching the wood with light—
O strange to think—hung all things that have breath,
Trees, insects, cows, even moths that fly by night
And man, and life in every form—and death.

J. R. YOUNG

The Moth

Out from the dim and guideless waste of night
Fluttered a moth, and died before the dawn
Upon the sill where we, with curtains drawn,
Forbade him entry to the lusted light.
So o'er the shining windows of your heart
I bade draw down the curtains of constraint
And leave my love in darkness, where the faint
Fragrance of duty done might ease our part.
Yet, ah, I would not, dear, some useless thing—
Dead love, or barren—when the day should rise
That you at last might ope the casement—bring,
Shrivelled in circumspective sacrifice—
Now, therefore, now, open the window wide—
Take in, take in, my love too long denied.

The Quest

What is this Death, and where? Far have I sought,
Oft conjured him, and yet he cometh not.
With wild petitions and many a crafty plot
Have I beguiled him; all have come to naught.
Others, my friends, have found him; they have caught
Reluctant Death, and found his mystery sweet;
Clung to him close and won to his retreat,
Nor told me how this marvel they had wrought.
Deep have I drunk of the polluted stream,
Seeking him hidden there like sacrament;

Deemed that he lurked where poison-berries gleam;
Galloped in hope when hounds ran hot on scent.
Still he eludes my most seductive snare,
And still I live. What is this Death, and where?

THE END

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